

Shades of Darcy

An Analysis of Three Novelistic Responses to Pride and Prejudice

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Shades of Darcy

An Analysis of Three Novelistic Responses to *Pride and Prejudice*.

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Abstract

This thesis explores three spin-off novels inspired by Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Alexandra Potter's *Me and Mr Darcy*, Shannon Winslow's *The Darcys of Pemberley* and Maya Slater's *The Private Diary of Mr Darcy*. Through close-readings of the character of Mr Darcy, and comparing and contrasting the re-interpretations of him with the original character in *Pride and Prejudice*, I argue that by taking it upon themselves to give Mr Darcy a new story and a new life they are taking an active role in reading *Pride and Prejudice* and making the change from reader to author. I argue that the authors have taken liberties in changing the character in order to make him more compatible with the fantasies they are trying to fulfill. My analysis has shown how the authors of these novels show loyalty to the character and to Austen herself, by defending his actions and arrogance, and how his arrogance and pride survive the re-imaginings of his character. Through giving Mr Darcy a new story and new destiny, the authors are contributing in keeping the character, and the original novel, alive beyond the original pages of *Pride and Prejudice*. This thesis is inspired by the field of reception study devoted to *Pride and Prejudice* and a suggestion to future focus on spin-off literature and fan-fiction in this field.

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Introduction

*Fan fictions are texts written about media and popular culture by fans. In these texts, fan fiction authors take up the characters and plotlines of the original media and creatively rework them by developing new relationships between characters, extending plot and timelines, creating new settings, and exploring novel themes.*¹ - Rebecca W. Black

Ever since its publication, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* has inspired its readers to take it upon themselves to develop the story further, to add new aspects, to imagine what happens next and to expand the characters beyond their original framework.² *Pride and Prejudice* has inspired countless spin-offs, prequels, unofficial sequels and re-tellings, both in printed form and online. In this thesis I will look into three such responses to the character of Mr Darcy. I have chosen novels that all take a different approach to original novel and to the character of Mr Darcy himself, and I will compare them to the original *Pride and Prejudice* in order to see where these authors have taken liberties in creating a new character, and how they have changed the character to fit their own interpretation.

Jane Austen has a fan base, and a creative one at that. For decades, her devotees have written stories on the basis of her fictional worlds – recounting what happened after Emma's wedding, for example, or what might have taken place after Mr Bennet's death. Such narratives are instances of “fan fiction”: fiction written by and for fans, which is founded on the characters, settings, concepts, or plots of antecedent texts.³

Sequels, prequels and other versions of events are a common factor with the Jane Austen fan base, used for their own amusement and satisfaction.

The area of Austen-studies that concern the cult surrounding both Austen as an individual and *Pride and Prejudice* as a novel is one that is under constant development, and one I feel should have more academic focus and research devoted to it. Juliette Wells points to literary theorist Daria Pimenova in defining fan fiction:

Focusing on how fan fiction is generated, Daria Pimenova contends that “the relationship between fan fiction and its source text is far from clear-cut. The only dependency that can be stated for sure is that of origin. Born out of affection for a particular text, fan fiction borrows its characters and settings and expands its already existent universe without wanting to achieve

¹ Rebecca W. Black, “English-Language Learners, Fan Communities, and 21st–Century Skills”, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literary* Vol. 52, No 8 (may 2009): 688

² Deborah Yaffe, *Among the Janeites. A journey through the world of Jane Austen fandom*, (Boston: Mariner Books, 2013): 69

³ Veerle Van Steenhuyse, “Jane Austen Fan Fiction and the Situated Fantext”, *ENGLISH TEXT CONSTRUCTION*. 4 (2) (2011): 165

independency in the sense of breaking free from the source and its characters. Instead, what it wants is to be a tribute to the source and to belong, but belong on its own terms.⁴

Austen-devotees are uniquely found on several levels, from the scholarly to the online fan-fiction. In this way, Austen has helped inspire new forms of reading, one in which the reader becomes the author or co-creator, taking it on themselves to pick up where Austen left off.

The industry surrounding Austen has grown to a fascinating volume, with cinematic adaptations, readers taking part in role-playing, countless novels inspired by her works, and it is my fascination with this phenomenon, this cult movement, that lies behind my choice of thesis topic, “[...] today’s “Jane Austen” is a bonanza of presence, to all appearances the answer to every Janeite’s dream for more and more. She seems to be everywhere, reaching well beyond the English-speaking world.”⁵ I would argue that this movement is in part responsible for what I see as a new form of reading, a form of reading where the reader changes role from receiver to sender, from reader to author. Also, reading is no longer a solitary action, thanks to reading communities online, such as The Republic of Pemberley.⁶ This community has inspired readers to share their own versions of events with other readers, along with lengthy discussions about their favourite parts, plots or characters. While the online communities devoted to Austen are both relevant and of importance when looking at the Austen-inspired cult movement, I have chosen to limit my focus to three published works, as I feel the online communities are too vast to make a suitable topic for a thesis of this scope, and to focus solely on online fan fiction would greatly limit one of the aims of this thesis – which is to look at different portrayals of Mr Darcy. In this thesis I will argue that the readers of *Pride and Prejudice* have taken it upon themselves to change the character of Mr Darcy in order to fit different needs of reading communities, changing their role from reader to writer and creator.

The online community for sharing and commenting on fan fiction, fanfiction.net⁷, counts almost three thousand stories related to *Pride and Prejudice*⁸, covering everything from the continuation of Mr Darcy and Elizabeth’s marriage to stories concerning less

⁴ Juliette Wells, *Everybody’s Jane. Austen in the Popular Imagination* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 23

⁵ Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen Cults and Cultures* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 180

⁶ “Jane Austen | The Republic of Pemberley,” The Republic of Pemberley, accessed 15 October 2013, www.pemberley.com

⁷ “Fanfiction,” Fanfiction.net – unleash your imagination, accessed 1 November 2013, www.fanfiction.net

⁸ “Pride and Prejudice Fanfiction Archive | Fanfiction,” Fanfiction.net –unleash your imagination, accessed 1 November 2013, www.fanfiction.net/book/Pride-and-Prejudice/

prominent characters, such as how Lady Catherine and Anne de Bourgh truly felt about Mr Darcy breaking the unspoken agreement between Lady Catherine and Mrs Darcy about the marriage of their children, and exploring the marriage between Mr Collins and Charlotte Lucas.

The part of Austen studies which has been concerned with the cult that has surrounded her, and the ‘dotty Janeites’ have often been an object of ridicule, and these two aspects are a unique reception of a series of novels along with a unique position given to an author since the end of the nineteenth-century.

At the Royal Society of Literature in particular, Austen’s novels were celebrated with an enthusiasm that would seem crazy if it were enacted in classrooms or conferences today. These Janeites flaunted their devotion: Austen was their *dear* Jane, their *matchless* Jane, and they are her *cult*, her *sect*, her *little company* (*fit though few*), her *tribe* of adorers who discuss and re-discuss the *miracle* of her work in extravagant, patently hyperbolic terms. [...] Our modern term *fans* derives from the pejorative term *fanatic*, and Janeites dare the world to mock them for their adoration (Johnson, p.8-9).

While the phrase ‘Janeite’ can by many, including scholars, be referred to as a negative word, those who refer to themselves as ‘Janeite’ adopt the term with pride, caring for Austen as if she was a friend, and caring for the characters as if they were real. Deborah Yaffe explores this cult in her book *Among the Janeites*, questioning why exactly Jane Austen has achieved so much popularity:

Perhaps Austen represented a simpler, slower-paced era that appealed to a public exhausted by 24/7 bad news. Or perhaps women longed for romantic courtships conducted by chivalrous men who would fall in love without expecting so much as a kiss in return. Was it the elegance of Austen’s language, or the sharp edge of her social satire, or her strong heroines, or her happy endings? Were the inhabitants of Britain’s former colonies indulging their latent Anglophilia? Or did everyone just want an excuse to dress up in Empire waists and long gloves (Yaffe, p. xxiii)?

Yaffe explores the option of readers using Jane Austen as a means of escaping their own lives, and relish in the decadency and fantasy of the regency.

Yaffe, being a self-professed Janeite herself, inserts herself into one of the largest Jane Austen communities – JASNA (Jane Austen Society of North America), where she quickly discovers how much the members care for both Austen and her characters, discussing the characters’ lives as if they were living people, or even close, personal friends (Yaffe, p. 25-26), which has inspired people such as Sue Forgue to launch an internet site devoted to helping writers of fan fiction find accurate information about the Regency period (Yaffe, p. 21).

The question of why fans write fan-fiction, sequels and prequels have been raised by a number of theorists in the past, and it has been argued that this is related to “the seemingly all-encompassing force of commercial media” (Van Steenhuyse, p. 166). Veerle Van Steenhuyse argues in her article “Jane Austen fan fiction and the situated fantext” that this response comes from Henry Jenkins’s theory concerning poaching, which builds on Michel de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday life* (Van Steenhuyse, p. 166). Jenkins argues that fans are “textual poachers”, who “appropriate popular texts and reread them in a fashion that serves different interests” (Van Steenhuyse, p. 166):

“Slash” fans, for example, can be said to commandeer the intellectual property of others because they reinterpret the sexual orientation of their favourite characters [...] and write fan fiction from this “corrective” reading [...] this certainly holds true for Austen fan fiction. Janeites, as Austen fans are commonly known, know very well that their idol’s work is out of copyright and, therefore, “fair game” [...] (Van Steenhuyse, p. 166).

Pride and Prejudice has several parts which are open to interpretation, including the marriages and personal lives of many of the characters. Fans have the opportunity to give many secondary characters a new back-story, and to give depth and variety to them and their decisions. Fans are able to take their favourite characters that are not so prominent in *Pride and Prejudice*, and give them a voice.

The character of Mr Darcy goes through several changes throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, from the marriage prospect worth “ten thousand a year”⁹, to “the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world” (Austen, p. 8) during the course of one evening, and then to the saviour of the Bennets’ grace (Austen, p. 209), and by not standing up to take credit for what he has sacrificed for them, he truly changes the doubt that has been installed in the reader through his pride, and becomes the romantic hero, winning Elizabeth’s heart. Through declaring how he has fallen in love with Elizabeth against his better judgement, Mr Darcy’s pride also makes his first proposal to Elizabeth disastrous (Austen, p. 125). Sarah Wootton argues that, “Darcy’s character resonates with a Romantic need for self-expression; he is unable to repress the startling strength of his feelings in the first proposal scene, and cries out ‘with more feeling than politeness’ after hearing the news of Lydia’s elopement.”¹⁰, yet this is reinterpreted to him being uncomfortable away from home, and troubled with worry for his sister, something that Mr Darcy himself indicates in *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen, p. 117). Wootton also argues, “Darcy reflects the ‘dilemma of masculinity’ that emerged towards the

⁹ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, (New York: W. W. Norton & co, 2001), 8

¹⁰ Sarah Wootton, “The Byronic in Jane Austen’s *Persuasion* and *Pride and Prejudice*”, *The Modern Language Review* Vol 102 No 1 (2007): 34-35

end of the eighteenth century when politeness, which could easily be mistaken for effeminacy, ceased to be the dominant ideal” (Wootton, p. 35). The character of Mr Darcy can be seen as a Byronic hero, in the sense that he is an isolated, brooding and proud man, “By introducing the usually isolated Byronic hero into an intimate, domestic setting, Austen exposes the more unappealing aspects of his character” (Wootton, p. 35).

The Novels

The character of Mr Darcy is a popular focus for literary adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*, both in published form and on-line. Deborah Yaffe has devoted a chapter in her book *Among the Janeites* to exploring who the authors behind Mr Darcy-related spin-offs are, and why they wrote their novels. Yaffe examines several reasons behind the Darcy-related obsession¹¹, one author being inspired by Mr Darcy and Elizabeth, “She was drawn to the connection between Darcy and Elizabeth, their sparkling repartee and their relationship of equality” (Yaffe, p. 76). Another author, however, was inspired by the character of Mr Darcy alone, “She began to wonder about Darcy’s transformation, from the arrogant snob Elizabeth scornfully rejects to the generous man who deserves the love she finally gives him” (Yaffe, p. 77). Considering the focus on Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice*, there are several other sides to the story for readers to explore:

[Arnie Perlstein] believes that each Austen novel can be read as telling two different stories: the familiar one, with its beloved heroine, witty social satire, and happy ending, and an unfamiliar, far darker version, in which even sympathetic characters lie and scheme, indulge in illicit sex, conceal out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and even commit murder, en route to an ending that may be so happy after all (Yaffe, p. 117-118).

While many may argue this is an unrealistic and greatly exaggerated approach to writing fan fiction, it is an example of the extents of fan fiction related to Jane Austen, and the variety which exists within this genre.

The novels chosen for this thesis have three different focuses on *Pride and Prejudice*, represent three different perspectives on the character of Mr Darcy and have three different settings. All three novels belong to the ‘chick-lit’-genre. Andrew Wright has studied several adaptations and interpretations of Austen’s work, comparing them across geographical borders, in different media and with different intended audiences:

¹¹ Many deriving from the BBC Television adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* from 1995, starring Colin Firth as Mr Darcy. Yaffe found this adaptation inspired a new wave of Darcy-obsessed Janeites, and points several times to this adaptation in her novel.

A study of the many adaptations of Jane Austen's works leads to certain conclusions. The first is that no version escapes its time or place. English, American, Australian, and South African renderings each bear the marks of its origins. Second, the internal circumstances of the countries in which the adaptations make their appearance are inevitably reflected [...]. Third, and perhaps most important for the would-be adapter, the closer the rendering to the words of Jane Austen the better.¹²

This can also be related to the novels in my discussion, as they are all set in different era's and points in time, yet they are all written in the twenty-first century, and this influence does fall onto the page at times, with modern expressions, behaviour and language.

Me and Mr Darcy by Alexandra Potter was published in 2007, and is the only one of the novels I will be exploring that does not take place directly in the regency. The novel is set in present-day England and New York, and displays its explicit awareness of the fan base surrounding *Pride and Prejudice*, along with its vast popularity and many adaptations. The plot itself follows the plot-twists of *Pride and Prejudice*, following Emily Albright on a Jane Austen book tour in England. During the trip she meets and falls in love with Mr Darcy, although she cannot be sure that he is real or a figment of her imagination. Emily comes to the realization that the fantasy she had about Mr Darcy is not a realistic fantasy, and she ends up turning down Mr Darcy's offer of marriage, instead encouraging him to pursue Elizabeth Bennet. This novel plays on the months in *Pride and Prejudice* where Mr Darcy is not present at Longbourn or Netherfield, creating an alternative story for him, and also fusing the modern and the classic story. By playing on these empty months, Alexandra Potter creates a need in the reader for the classic story in *Pride and Prejudice* to run its course. The reader begins to worry for Mr Darcy and Elizabeth, and for their love story.

The Darcys of Pemberley by Shannon Winslow was published in 2011, and is the first in a series of sequels inspired by *Pride and Prejudice*. This novel continues the story of Darcy and Elizabeth, and the challenges they experience now that they are married. Elizabeth and Mr Darcy struggle with family, expectations and fertility, showing how their marriage is not perfect. The novel continues in the style of *Pride and Prejudice*, with Elizabeth as a first-person narrative voice. The novel also explores the destinies of the other characters of *Pride and Prejudice*, specifically focusing on couples, Jane and Mr Bingley and Lydia and Mr Wickham. Winslow has taken the characters from *Pride and Prejudice* and developed them further, with variable luck. Mr Wickham has been made more devious, Lydia has developed

¹² Andrew Wright, "Jane Austen Adapted", *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* Vol. 30 No.3, Jane Austen 1775 – 1975 (1975): 439

from naive and silly to self-centred and insensitive, creating a frustration for the reader. This novel is a good example of what interests most Jane Austen-related fan fiction: what happens after the wedding.

The Private Diary of Mr Darcy by Maya Slater was published in 2007, and is the flip-side of *Pride and Prejudice*. The novel is written in diary-form, and retells the events of *Pride and Prejudice* from Mr Darcy's side. This novel is the only one of the three I will be using where Mr Darcy serves as a first-person narrator, and not a secondary character. This novel, like *Me and Mr Darcy*, uses the months in *Pride and Prejudice* where Mr Darcy is absent as inspiration for creating more layers to Mr Darcy as a character. The reader is being made privy to Mr Darcy's private thoughts, his personal life, and more detailed accounts of what we have already read in *Pride and Prejudice*, namely the incident with Mr Wickham and Georgiana, and how Mr Darcy interfered in Jane Bennett and Mr Bingley's budding romance

This thesis is divided into three chapters, each chapter devoted to one novel. The first chapter will explore the Mr Darcy the reader meets in *Me and Mr Darcy*, the second chapter will explore *The Darcys of Pemberley*, and the third will be devoted to *The Private Diary of Mr Darcy*. In each chapter I will be comparing the new novels to the Mr Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, and at the end of the thesis I will include a conclusion where I will compare the three new portrayals to each other, to see how different they are from each other and if there are similarities between them, are there any universal traits of Mr Darcy which transcends new readings and new interpretations. Are there any aspects which linger through different interpretive communities, or have the authors changed him completely?

Reception Theory

The theoretical field that I will be basing my thesis on will be reception theory, and the scholarly methodologies I will be using are textual analysis, and I will be comparing these new responses up against Austen's original text, looking both for similarities and differences. I will examine the portrayal of Mr Darcy in the three novels I have chosen, and compare them with the characters we meet in *Pride and Prejudice* in order to see if there are changes being made to the character, how these are shown and why these changes have been made. I will argue that the actual character in *Pride and Prejudice* has been abandoned by the new authors, and that instead their new portrayals of Mr Darcy are based on the fantasy and the cult-figure he has become in Janeite communities. As reception theory is quite a large field, I have chosen those branches and theorists whose main focus is the reader, or how the text and the reader come together to form meaning.

In his essay "The Death of the Author"¹³, Roland Barthes argued that to give a text an author is to give it limits, thus Barthes wants to shift the focus from the author to the text, a view that is shared with him by Stanley Fish. Barthes writes that the voice in a text will never be acknowledged, arguing that "writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin" (Barthes, p. 221). Barthes explains how the author is a modern figure and a product of society:

The image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions, while criticism still consists for the most part in saying that Baudelaire's work is the failure of Baudelaire the man, Van Gogh's his madness, Tchaikovsky's his vice. The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the *author* 'confiding' in us (Barthes, p. 221).

When the text has an author, the text will always be read in light of that author, which Barthes argues limits the text, and limits the interpretations that can be made by the readers.

Barthes is not the only champion for the removal of the author figure, and he notes how Mallarmé and Proust were amongst the earliest to advocate a separation between author and work, and letting the texts and language stand on their own accord. According to Mallarmé, "it is language which speaks, not the author" (Barthes, p. 222), while Proust made

¹³ Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" in *The Book History Reader*, ed. D. Finkelstein et al. (London: Routledge, 2002), 221

a “radical reversal, instead of putting his life into his novel, [...] he made of his very life a work for which his own book was the model” (Barthes, p. 222).

Barthes points to how linguistics have already demolished the Author-figure, an unnecessary character that does not bring anything to the text, the text functions perfectly well without an Author:

Linguistically, the author is never more than the instance writing, just as *I* is nothing other than the instance saying *I*: language knows a ‘subject’, not a ‘person’, and this subject empty outside of the very enunciation which defines it, suffices to make language ‘hold together’, suffices, that is to say, to exhaust it (Barthes, p. 222).

In the instance of *Pride and Prejudice*, the author is just as idolized as the characters and the novel itself. The author is someone for the readers to live up to, and the literary responses have a responsibility to be worthy of Austen. Thus the role of Jane Austen gives the readers a sense of expectations to both the texts she wrote, and the literary responses to them.

When a text is given an author, Barthes argues, that author becomes a part of the text’s past, and there can be drawn a line separating the before and the after, “The Author is thought to *nourish* the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child” (Barthes, p. 222). Yet this relation between author and text will always give the text limits, as the reader will always search for traces of the author in the text itself, and the removal of the author will lay the groundwork for a whole new reading:

The removal of the Author [...], is not merely an historical fact or an act of writing; it utterly transforms the modern text (or – which is the same thing – the text is henceforth made and read in such a way that at all levels the author is absent) (Barthes, p. 222).

Barthes goes as far as comparing the modern Author to an Author-God, giving the reading of the texts an almost theological aspect, and points to how a text does not have a single meaning, but is a “multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash” (Barthes, p. 223), and that an author can only imitate the action of writing and ideas of different cultures. The Author is not a creator, only a translator. The Author has no power to create, only to take what is already written, mix and contrast them, “Did he wish to *express himself*, he ought to at least to know that the inner ‘thing’ he thinks to ‘translate’ is itself only a ready-formed dictionary, its words only explainable through other words, and so on indefinitely” (Barthes, p. 223).

Barthes argues that the birth of the Author also marks the birth of the Critic, and that these have ruled side by side. Criticism has had the wrong focus, as it aims to disentangle

instead of decipher (Barthes, p. 223), and this act of disentangling has been focused on finding the Author within the text. When the Author has been found, the text is explained, “the space of writing is to be ranged over, not pierced; writing ceaselessly posits meaning ceaselessly to evaporate it, carrying out a systematic exemption of meaning” (Barthes, p. 223). Barthes argues that by removing the Author, the meaning of the text is also removed, the meaning set by the Author that the Critic has set out to discover, thus liberating the text from its previous restraints. The text is open to be interpreted on its own account, to stand its own ground, and to have meaning in itself, not based on an Author.

Barthes ends his essay by claiming that the reader is born with the death of the author (Barthes, p. 224), and that by removing the Author the reader is free. He claims that the reader is “the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost” (Barthes, p. 224). The reader stands without strings and limits, without “history, biography, psychology” (Barthes, p. 224), and that the role of reading and the reader itself has been underestimated through history.

Barthes gains support in these claims about the author from Michel Foucault, who it can be argued continues the discussion of the author where Barthes leaves it.

The truth is quite the contrary: the author is not an indefinite source of significations which fill a work; the author does not precede the works, he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction.¹⁴

Foucault argues that the author limits the texts, and keeps the free manipulation, circulation and interpretations from occurring. Jane Austen’s position with her fan base is an example of how many readers identify an author with their texts, being as much a fan of Jane Austen as a person than of her novels. One can however argue if this obsession with Jane Austen limits their reading of *Pride and Prejudice*, considering how they are attempting to continue the story in her image, and to do their ‘divine Jane’ justice.

In his essay “Interpreting the Variorum”, Fish takes discusses the role of the reader and of interpretation, where meaning is created and who creates it. Fish is an advocate for the reader, and his work was an important contribution to reader-response analysis. Fish’s essay is relevant for my work in this thesis as the new authors have taken aspects of *Pride and*

¹⁴ Michel Foucault, “What is an author?”, in *Modern Criticism and Theory. A Reader. Third Edition*, ed. David Lodge et al. (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2008), 292.

Prejudice and created new meaning, and they have created different meanings from one another, without any one of them being more accurate and more correct than the others. Fish writes of an important aspect of reception theory, that analysis which presumes that the meaning lies in the text will always “point in as many directions as there are interpreters; that is, not only will it prove something, it will prove anything.”¹⁵ If the reader is to accept that all meaning is inherent in the text itself there will always be just as many meanings as there are interpreters, and they will all be justified. A text can mean and portray whatever the reader wishes for it to mean, “This transferring of responsibility from the text to its readers is what the lines ask us to do – it is the essence of their experience – and in my terms is it therefore what the lines *mean*” (Fish, p. 386).

Fish also points to how the adding of new information or new analysis can change the meaning created in the text, and how the meaning found in certain parts of a text must be seen in a more complete context in order to create a true understanding in the reader. The reader brings expectations that are altered through his or her reading, and “In other words, it is the structure of the reader’s experience rather than any structures available on the page that should be the object of description” (Fish, p. 387). Fish argues that the meaning of the text is not embedded in the text itself, but in the reader’s experience while reading the text, and argues that focus should be shifted from the text to the reader, and that the reader has been underestimated;

My quarrel with this procedure (and with the assumptions that generate it) is that in the course of following it through the reader’s activities are at once ignored and devalued. They are ignored because the text is taken to be self-sufficient – everything is in it – and they are devalued because when they are thought of at all, they are thought of as the disposable machinery of extraction (Fish, P. 390).

When regards to the literary responses discussed in this thesis, the reader extracting meaning from a text is what has resulted in the existence of these responses. The reader has created new texts in their own image, thus meaning that the responses are a result of a text merging with the desires and imagination of the readers.

The reader has to change and adjust his standing and opinion throughout the reading of the text if the meaning is in the text, in order to extract the meaning, but this process has previously not been acknowledged. Fish suggests that this focused should be shifted, and while the meaning is in the reader, the actions taken by the reading should also be considered

¹⁵ Stanley Fish, “Interpreting the Variorum”, in *Modern Criticism and Theory. A Reader. Third Edition*, ed. David Lodge et al. (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2008), 385

to having meaning themselves, “In the procedures I would urge, the reader’s activities are at the center of attention, were they are regarded not as leading to meaning but as *having* meaning” (Fish, p. 390).

While Fish does wish completely to disregard the author, Fish does point to the fact that the reader for whom the author is writing is an intended or an optimal reader:

A reader who is aware of that debate will not only *have* the experience I describe; he will recognize at the end of it that he has been asked to take a position on one side of a continuing controversy; and that recognition (also a part of his experience) will be part of the disposition with which he moves into the lines that follow. [...] It would be possible to continue with this profile of the optimal reader, but I would not get very far before someone would point out that what I am really describing is the intended reader, the reader whose education, opinions concerns, linguistic competences, and so on make him capable of having the experience the author wished to provide (Fish, p. 392).

The author did have an intention and a meaning when writing the text, and the readers with the right pre-requisites will be able to extract this meaning and truly experience the full benefit of the text, yet that does not mean that all meaning is embedded in the text itself, as the meaning is realized in the reader:

To describe that experience is therefore to describe the reader’s efforts at understanding, and to describe the reader’s efforts at understanding is to describe his realization (in two senses) of an author’s intention (Fish, p. 392).

The reader, regardless of being the intended reader or not, always creates a meaning, and despite it not being the meaning that the intended reader would extract, or the author intended, it can be argued that it is just as valid as what the author intended while writing,

This then, is my thesis: that the form of the reader’s experience, formal units, and the structure of intention are one, that they come into view simultaneously, and that therefore the questions of priority and independence do not arise (Fish, p. 394).

While the meaning created by the intended reader and other readers might differ from the meaning the author intended, any meaning creates still carries some validity in its own right.

Acts of interpretation assigned to discover meaning in a text, can also be put into action to create similar meaning from every text, along with several different meanings of the same text, “Indeed, it has always been possible to put into action interpretive strategies designed to make all texts one, or to put it more accurately, to be forever making the same text” (Fish, p. 397). This being said, that does not take away the validity of the meaning that has been created, although this does bring up the problem of the reader being able to justly find the meaning he or she desires, and to always find that meaning in the text;

This is then both a stipulation of what meaning there is and a set of directions for finding it, which is of course a set of directions – of interpretive strategies – for making it, that is, the endless reproduction of the same text (Fish, p. 397).

When looking at *Pride and Prejudice*, along with its literary responses, it can be argued that the interpretations made by the readers are what they set out to find, and not necessarily what is found by everyone in the same text, and vice versa. A common interpretation of Mr Darcy's pride is that he is shy and uncomfortable, yet considering that many readers look upon Mr Darcy with affection, it can be argued that Mr Darcy is shy instead of proud because that is the readers desire.

One very important and relevant aspect of Fish's essay is his description of interpretive communities. Fish points to interpretive communities to show how a reading of a text is a cultural construct. An interpretive community is "made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions" (Fish, p. 398). A reader can belong to several interpretive communities or shift between them. A common interpretive community can be those who have the same cultural context, which gives the readers a specific way of reading the text. Readers from a different cultural context will read the text differently.

Relating this more closely to my thesis, the three novels I will be exploring can arguably be seen as examples of three different interpretive communities; Janeites are all members of a large interpretive community, and organisations such as The Republic of Pemberley is an interpretive community.

Interpretive communities grow and decline, and individuals move from one to another; thus, while the alignments are not permanent, they are always there, providing just enough stability for the interpretive battles to go on, and just enough shift and slippage to assure that they will never be settled (Fish, p. 398).

While the three novels in this thesis have some similarities, they can still arguably be examples of three different interpretive communities.

Different readings made by different interpretive communities are culturally constructed, yet the meaning created will be the texts' true meaning by those who have found it. Different interpretive communities have used different interpretive strategies in order to extract meaning, and "each perceives the text (or texts) its interpretive strategies demand and call into being" (Fish, p. 398). Fish credits interpretive communities for the question as to why different readers from different situations will find the same meaning in texts;

This, then, is the explanation both for the stability of interpretation among different readers (they belong to the same community) and for the regularity with which a single reader will employ different interpretive strategies and thus make different texts (he belongs to different communities) (Fish, p. 398).

When concerning the novels in this thesis, they belong to different interpretive communities when explaining Mr Darcy's pride as shyness and discomfort, as they had different reasons for explaining why Mr Darcy was uncomfortable.

Wolfgang Iser's essay "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach" has often been compared to Stanley Fish's "Interpreting the Variorum" as they both are concerned with shifting the point of view from the author to the reader. Iser begins the essay, "The phenomenological theory of art lays full stress on the idea that, in considering a literary work, one must take into account not only the actual text but also, and in equal measure, the actions involved in responding to the text".¹⁶ The reader's response to the text is part of the analysis, establishing the importance and the role the reader has when interpreting a literary text, establishing that a text has two poles, the artistic and the aesthetic, the artistic pole directed at the text created by the author, and the aesthetic pole directed to the reading done by a reader, "From this polarity it follows that the literary work cannot be completely identical with the text, or with the realization of the text, but in fact must lie halfway between the two" (Iser, p. 50). Thus the text itself changes from reader to reader, and with each reading made of the text. The text is not finished by the author; it comes into being through a process involving both reader and author.

Iser uses the notion of how sentences act upon each other, meaning how sentences introduces new aspects, introducing aspects of anticipation and retrospection, thus constantly changing the reading, to explain the process of creating a text between author and reader, "This is of especial importance in literary texts in view of the fact that they do not correspond to any objective reality outside themselves" (Iser, p. 52), yet they are what creates the world within the text, and where meaning, observation and history lies, yet there are more to the text than just the sentences. The meaning of the sentences lies beyond the sentences themselves, and this is where the reader finds the meaning to create the text, and why they are so important;

¹⁶ Wolfgang Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Process.", in *Reader-Response Criticism. From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. Jane Tompkins et al. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 50

In their capacity as statements, observations, purveyors of information etc., they are always indications of something that is to come, the structure of which is foreshadowed by their specific content (Iser, p. 53).

Through the sentences, the reader's imagination is inspired, creating a meaning both before and after the sentence itself, which chances throughout the reading, making the act of reading an active one, bringing the text together as a whole, with both the reader and the author.

This reading process constantly creates expectations throughout a reading, expectations which are seldom met, as the process becomes a collaboration of the reader's experience and the author's intention, thus creating a new meaning for each new reader:

One might simplify by saying that each intentional sentence correlative opens up a particular horizon, which is modified, if not completely changed, by succeeding sentences. While these expectations arouse interest in what is to come, the subsequent modification of them will also have a retrospective effect on what has already been read. (Iser, p. 53-54)

This is what causes the reader to become personally involved with the text, as what has been read is modified by the reader, who brings his or her own memory and experience to the reading, and adding aspects of past, present and future to the reading, "These connections are the product of the reader's mind working on the raw material of the text" (Iser, p. 54).

Through this process, the reader achieves a personal relationship with the text, and can almost feel involved with the text that is being read, and this has created the virtual dimension of the text, which is composed of the coming together of text and imagination, author and reader (Iser, p. 54).

Through the importance of sentences building on each other in order to create a full text, a gap in the flow of sentences will be likely to create a reaction in the reader. Gaps are also created the expectations of the author. When a sentence differs greatly from the one preceding it, this creates a 'blockage' in the reading process. This can be intentional by the author in order to create plot twist and turns, and these gaps in the flow of the virtual dimension creates an "opportunity [for] us to bring into play our own faculty for establishing connections – for filling in the gaps left by the text itself" (Iser, p. 55). The gaps in the text appear through the expectations of the reader, and it is in these gaps where the spin-off genre is born, and where it thrives, as this is where the readers can create a new story, independently of the author or the text.

The fact that the text itself changes throughout the reading will also create the possibility of several different readings done by the same reader, "The reasons for this may lie

in the reader's own change of circumstances, still; the text much be such as to allow this variation. On a second reading familiar occurrences now tend to appear in a new light and seem to be at times corrected, at times enriched" (Iser, p. 56). This is why many readers find new aspects of a text on a second reading, or find that they do not agree with the impression they were left with after the first reading.

Iser points out that while the reader is able to insert himself into the text and use his own imagination in order to help create the text, and even more so in order to fill in the gaps created by the author, the reader cannot create see that is not there, nor create something that is not made available in some degree (Iser, p. 57). Also, the author only has a certain amount of influence over the reader's imagination, nor will the author attempt to "set the *whole* picture before the reader's eyes" (Iser, p. 57). In order for a text to both attract the reader and satisfy the author, there needs to be a balance between the two poles. An author must inspire the imagination of the reader, and the reader must have the tools needed to be able to be inspired by the author in order to create a harmonious relationship between the two poles, and to create meaning.

Although the reading process changes the meaning created by the reader throughout the text, the reader will always strive to piece the text together, to create a meaning in the entire text as a whole, not just on sentence level. The reader will be attempting to find the consistency of the text as a whole, which also affects the on-going reading process.

Iser ends his essay by exploring what happens to the reader through the reading process, arguing that the reader changes through a reading, as he or she sheds expectations, and he will lose them, leaving a feeling of emptiness. The reader has compromised with the text, and in a sense given up a part of him, although the reader is left with more knowledge than before the process started.

In relation to the spin-off and fan fiction genre, and thus also to this thesis, Iser's theory of gaps and interpretive communities is the one most relevant. Both *Me and Mr Darcy*, and *Mr Private Diary of Mr Darcy* are examples of how gaps in the text has inspired the readers to create new novels, by creating novels in their own image where Austen allows them to. By giving no clear answer as to what happened during the months where Mr Darcy is absent, Austen has created a very literal gap in the text, where the reader can introduce their

responses. *The Darcys of Pemberley* is an example of how an interpretive community can create a meaning of the text beyond the limitations of the text, by continuing the story.

These theoretical essays are those which have seemed most to the topic of this thesis, and those whom explain what has occurred in the creation of the spin-off novels relating to *Pride and Prejudice*. The authors of the literary responses have taken a text and created a new one, thus taking the role from reader to author, both figuratively and literally.

Chapter 1: Me and Mr Darcy

“It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single girl in possession of her right mind must be in want of a decent man.”

The portrayal of Mr Darcy in *Me and Mr Darcy* attempts to stay closer to the original character than the other novels I will be studying, and this is something done deliberately by the author to create a realistic relationship with the events in *Pride and Prejudice*. The author’s intention with Mr Darcy in this novel is to show how the illusion and the fantasy of Mr Darcy might be best kept as just that – a fantasy. Meeting the ‘real thing’ might be somewhat anti-climactic.

Plot introduction

The novel is initially set in modern-day Manhattan, and Emily Albright, the protagonist, identifies herself as unhealthily obsessed with Mr Darcy on the very first page, and shares how this obsession is keeping her from living her own life:

To be honest, I blame Mr Darcy. I was just twelve years old when I first read *Pride and Prejudice* and I fell for him right from the start. [...] Mr Darcy was my first love. Devastatingly handsome, mysterious, smouldering and a total romantic, he set the bar for all my future boyfriends. Snuggled under the bedcovers with my flashlight, I couldn’t wait to grow up so I could find a man like him.¹⁷

In order to find an excuse to not go to Mexico with her friend, she signs up for a Jane Austen book tour over Christmas. While initially embarrassed to be the only one on the tour under the age of fifty, she becomes intrigued when a journalist her own age, Spike Hargreaves, joins the tour, but she is quickly makes the assumption he is a man she does not want to be further acquainted with. The tour-bus driver reveals aspects of Spike that is less than flattering, and Emily thus decides that Spike is not a man worth her time. When Spike eventually declares his love for Emily, Emily reacts with anger and declares he is a man whom she will never love, informing him she knows about his past. After Spike leaves, he sends her an e-mail explaining the actions he was accused of, and Emily comes to the realization she was wrong and Spike is a decent man.¹⁸

¹⁷ Alexandra Potter, *Me and Mr Darcy* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd, 2007), 1-2

¹⁸ The relationship between Spike and Emily mirror the relationship between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*.

At the first stop on the tour, Emily finds herself wandering away from the group, and meets a man who introduces himself as Mr Darcy. Emily initially believes him to be an actor and a part of the experience, but further comes to realize this man truly is Mr Darcy. As the novel progresses, she meets Mr Darcy several times, and finds herself experiencing the downside of a modern woman attempting a relationship with a Regency-period man. While initially believing herself to fall in love with her favourite literary character, she begins visualising the relationship they would have, and becomes offended when Mr Darcy scoffs at her notion to how she would keep the life she is used to. The relationship comes to its end when Mr Darcy proposes marriage to Emily, and she denies him, deciding to attempt for retribution with Spike.

Emily has firmly established herself as a 'Janeite', and has also given the reader an idea of how the character of Mr Darcy will be viewed and treated when he is first presented – with admiration. This is similar to how Mr Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* is perceived before he is properly introduced to the other characters;

[...]but his friend Mr Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien; and the report which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year.¹⁹

Emily Albright sees Mr Darcy as the solution to all the problems and disappointments she experiences in her love-life. Emily compares every man to Mr Darcy, desiring the idea of a gentleman and his manners, not necessarily Mr Darcy himself;

I pause over a copy of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, fingering the cover affectionately. 'Just imagine being in a world where men didn't steal your cab, cheat on you or have an addiction to Internet porn, but were chivalrous, devoted and honourable. And strode across fields in breeches and white shirts clinging to their chests... yum...' (Potter, p. 8)

The fact that she experiences ridicule from her friends because of her obsession does not stop her from putting Mr Darcy on a pedestal, calling him the perfect man and referring to him as someone she knows personally.

Mary Doyle Springer writes about Henry James and the rhetoric of characters, claiming that "James had the idea that literary characters are not only an object of critical and aesthetic interest, but indeed a most lively object."²⁰ This can be seen as very true to the treatment of Mr Darcy, especially in the novel *Me and Mr Darcy*. The women Emily Albright

¹⁹ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 7-8

²⁰ Mary Doyle Springer, *A Rhetoric of Literary Character: Some Women of Henry James* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 1

encounter during the course of the novel all inhabit some degree of admiration for or obsession with Mr Darcy, referring to him as if he is a person they know themselves. During the beginnings of both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Me and Mr Darcy*, Mr Darcy is the focus of gossip and talk among main and secondary characters, being the object of speculation and analysis.

Me and Mr Darcy is set outside of the *Pride and Prejudice*-universe, which sets it apart from other novels in the spin-off genre. However, *Me and Mr Darcy* is aware of the fan base surrounding *Pride and Prejudice*, the impact of the novel and its characters. Thus the character of Mr Darcy is already loved and admired from the beginning, his role as a romantic hero is established and the characters already are quite protective of him, quickly coming to his defence when his character is being challenged, “Hearing him insult Mr Darcy, indignation bites. How dare he? Darcy’s much more of a man than he’ll ever be, I think protectively” (Potter, p. 60). This affection for and defensiveness on Mr Darcy’s behalf is not something we encounter in *Pride and Prejudice*, as he is generally thought of as snobbish, proud and rude by the inhabitants of Hertfordshire, and their opinion of him does not change until his unselfish and generous actions come to light.

The First Meeting

The first meeting of Emily Albright and Mr Darcy takes place at Chawton Manor, when Emily, who is sleep-deprived and suffering from jet-lag, makes a decision to sit down at Jane Austen’s desk, and dozes off. The fact that she falls asleep introduces the recurring theme in the book that the meetings with Mr Darcy are only happening in her imagination, and that he is not a real person. When Emily inquires as to why they are in the same places, he always has a believable excuse (Potter, p. 116). The Mr Darcy that Emily meets is calm and confident. He is softer than the reader might have expected, being attentive and caring towards Emily, whom he presumes has lost her way. He is polite and kind, very much fulfilling the image of Mr Darcy that Emily has in her head (Potter, 70-72). The Mr Darcy first met in *Pride and Prejudice* is crasser than in this portrayal, coming across as proud and rude, even insulting Elizabeth Bennet to his friend (Austen, p. 9).

The politeness and gentleness of Mr Darcy is also apparent through how he reacts to Emily’s twenty-first century attire. While he is not seen as a person considerate of other people’s feelings, he apologizes before asking about Emily’s clothing, “He seems to be

bracing himself for what he's about to say next. 'I do not want to be rude, but are those *trousers* you are wearing?'" (Potter, p. 73). Mr Darcy does not appear to be condescending or judgemental towards Emily, but rather perplexed and curious. Emily quickly becomes drawn to the Mr Darcy she meets at Chawton Manor, "There's something very sexy about him, yet I can't work him out. One minute he seems shy and almost gauche, and the next he has an air of arrogance about him. It's a lethal combination" (Potter, p.76). Emily considers Mr Darcy's inability to understand her sarcasm as arrogance, yet Mr Darcy is never rude or dismissive towards her.

Many literary responses to *Pride and Prejudice* have re-invented Mr Darcy's infamous arrogance and pride as insecurity and humility, which is also the case in *Me and Mr Darcy*, "I smile shyly and this time he smiles back. It's a slight, awkward, unsure smile, almost as if smiling isn't something he does very much, which of course makes it incredibly seductive" (Potter, p. 76). There is also an aspect of early flirtation during this first encounter, showing a side of Mr Darcy that is bolder than the one we meet in *Pride and Prejudice*; "[I met a lot of interesting people] 'Would that include myself?' he asks quietly" (Potter, p. 77). Even during the first proposal scene between Mr Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet (Austen, p. 125), Mr Darcy is not comfortable showing that kind of emotion, which could be interpreted as an indicator that Mr Darcy is reluctant to showing his weaknesses, or losing his standing in society. To be proud and arrogant has become a personal tool of safety for him, a way of keeping people at a distance. Also, considering how Mr Darcy struggled with his feelings for Elizabeth, considering that her family has a lower social standing, for him to be obviously flirting in this manner with a woman whom he knows very little about, even less about her family, and who has a strange way of speaking and dressing herself, seems quite out of character. The Mr Darcy we first meet in *Me and Mr Darcy* is more suited to fit the readers' wishes than staying true to the original character.

The appearance of a blood-and-flesh Mr Darcy does not mean that *Pride and Prejudice*'s impact on the characters of *Me and Mr Darcy* is lost. While trying to make sense of the situation, Emily confronts Mr Darcy with the fact that he is a literary character, and cannot possibly be real, Emily presents Mr Darcy with a copy of *Pride and Prejudice*, making him come face to face with his own literary immortality. Surprisingly, he embraces this fact with joy: "I have to admit I am most flattered that someone should write a book about me.'[...] The pride is audible in his voice, and I have to say, he seems very pleased with

himself” (Potter, p. 118). The book given to Mr Darcy by Emily, changes along with the plot, truly making a point of the character being a living object.

I’m thumbing through the book now, as if somehow expecting the rest of the story to reappear, but the pages remain resolutely blank. There’s probably a hundred or so of them. White, empty pieces of paper. I stare at them in disbelief, trying to think of a rational explanation. But there isn’t one. How can words from a page simply disappear? Vanish into thin air? (Potter, p. 119)

The parts of *Pride and Prejudice* that Mr Darcy has not yet experienced when he makes his entry in *Me and Mr Darcy* are erased from pages. Seeing as the first meeting takes place in December, the pages turn blank after Mr Darcy leaves for London in November with Mr Bingley and his sisters (Austen, p. 89):

There’s this bit in the book when Mr Darcy leaves Netherfield in November and goes to London with the Bingleys for the winter. It’s at the end of Volume I, well, actually, it’s the first few lines of Volume II if I remember rightly, just after the ball. Elizabeth doesn’t see him again until Easter. That’s months. During that time nobody knew what he got up to, where he went, who he met. He could have done anything. Met anyone. Dated anybody (Potter, p. 329).

This aspect of giving Emily power over the events occurring in *Pride and Prejudice* gives the reader an additional feeling of control over the events in *Me and Mr Darcy*. On the one hand, the reader hopes that Emily restores balance to the story, so the original *Pride and Prejudice* is kept un-touched, yet on the other hand, the reader is fascinated by the aspect of a love story between two people from different backgrounds. This also makes the novel less predictable, and gives it an extra edge which separates it from other fan-fiction. This opens the reader up to other alternative stories of *Pride and Prejudice*. What would have happened to Jane or Elizabeth if Mr Darcy had not warmed to Elizabeth, and he had married someone else?

The Second Meeting & Shattering of Illusion

Emily has created a strong illusion for herself that Mr Darcy is the ultimate, perfect man, thus she has trouble seeing how he may not be as perfect as she imagined. When she finds aspects of him which she wishes to criticize, she immediately feels guilty and downplays them, yet she starts to question where her admiration for him stems from:

In fact, if I were to have one *teensy-weensy* criticism about Mr Darcy, it would be that he can be a little *too* intense, I decide, feeling a little self-conscious and looking away again. I mean, all this brooding is lovely in *theory* and he looks very handsome with his brow all crinkled up like that, but in reality, it’s all a bit – well- *heavy*.

But of course I’m being ridiculous. This is Mr Darcy. He doesn’t do chit-chat; he broods and smoulders and strides around setting pulses racing. And that’s why I love him, right (Potter, p. 156-157)?

The fact that having a romantic relationship with someone brought up two hundred years before oneself will cause some logical difficulties is a contributing factor to the breaking down of the romantic illusion that Mr Darcy is the perfect man and that the relationship will end in ‘happily ever after’. Mr Darcy is not necessarily arrogant and proud because of his character, but because of the time he was born and raised in,

Not that I don’t like heavy. I’m not saying that. Heavy is good. Especially after some of the idiots I’ve been out with who laughs at their own farts and can’t be serious for a minute. Only sometimes it’s nice to have a *little* light relief. A *bit* of chit-chat about the usual stuff: you know, current events, the latest celebrity gossip, what’s on TV. Maybe even have a bitch about the contestants on *American Idol* (Potter, p. 157).

Emily is reluctantly seeing the flaws in her perfect fantasy. Although there is an inconsistency in Mr Darcy’s character which shines through in this passage, showing how the author might have wanted to disown the fantasy and the dream. Mr Darcy lures a woman from her bed-chamber in her night-clothes, yet that is as far as he will go. When he has achieved this, he returns to his arrogant and proud manner, along with his nineteenth-century manners: “Of course. No goodnight kiss. I feel a stab of disappointment. Oh, well. What can I expect? He’s a gentleman, remember?” (Potter, p. 157)

While the changes Mr Darcy experiences in *Me and Mr Darcy* might be more drastic than in *Pride and Prejudice*, he still goes through some changes in character, which has been the focus of several pieces of spin-off fiction and the discussions by Janeites everywhere:

[Pamela Taylor] began haunting the newly minted fiction websites, looking for answers to her question: why does Darcy change? No one was answering it in a way that satisfied her. Yes, Darcy falls in love, but to Pamela that wasn’t enough to explain his willingness, at the end of the novel, to tie himself irrevocably, through marriage, to his worst enemy, the amoral seducer George Wickham. Darcy’s transformation has a spiritual dimension, she felt sure (Yaffe, p. 77-78).

Mr Darcy changes away from the role he was born into, and changes his previous position on how once his good opinion is lost, it is lost forever. Mr Darcy prepares himself for a life of enduring more than just the wrath of Lady Catherine when he decided to act on his affections for Elizabeth Bennet. Mr Darcy goes against his family, the expectations surrounding him from both society and his peers, and his own personal demons. He accepts Elizabeth’s family as his own, including the man who attempted to ruin his sister’s virtue, his reputation and prospects in Hertfordshire and the affections of the woman who had caught his eye. Keeping this in mind, one can argue that Mr Darcy’s growing affection and sub-sequent proposal to Emily in *Me and Mr Darcy* is a similar sacrifice. Mr Darcy is once more willing to upset both his family and the society he lives in, in order to marry the woman of his choosing. Emily is a

woman who will clearly be seen as beneath Mr Darcy's standing, and absolutely unfit to be lady of Pemberley, yet Mr Darcy is able to put the expectations surrounding him aside for the sake of his own happiness, "*Pride and Prejudice* examines the human ability to make judgements and to revise them."²¹ The fact that Mr Darcy is willing to sacrifice and change so substantially for Elizabeth, and for Emily, underlines how wrong Elizabeth truly was in her initial judgement of him.

Mr Darcy's manners and mannerisms cause exceeding dismay during the next meeting between Mr Darcy and Emily, as Emily is coming to terms with how much she appreciates her independence:

As he takes Lightning's reins and walks her calmly out of the stall, her ribcage rising and falling, her thick white tail swishing, I can't help but feel a snap of annoyance. I can't believe he hasn't even *asked* me if I want to go horseriding! I mean, don't *I* get a say in this (Potter, p. 215)?

While this notion of taking control is very much appreciated in *Pride and Prejudice*, and also something that would be very flattering for the women of Hertfordshire, for Emily it is insulting and belittling, and provides another crack in the fantasy she has created and strived for:

For the first time I get a glimpse of what it would be like to go out with someone who's brooding and dark and has all these repressed emotions. I mean, it all sounds very attractive and sexy in the book, but in real life I want someone who can give me a bear hug (Potter, p. 261).

Emily's realization marks the point when her fantasy dissolves, and reveals the author's message of leaving the fantasy behind, as the reality of the man on the page is not compatible with twenty-first century women.

As the novel progresses, the author of *Me and Mr Darcy* allows Mr Darcy's natural arrogance and pride to become more apparent. While his pride could be taken for insecurity during the first meeting between Emily and Mr Darcy, when they arrive at the fourth meeting, this insecurity has vanished and has been replaced by arrogance in a very direct form (Potter, p. 262). Refusing to agree to Emily's suggestion that luck spared him from getting thrown from a horse, attributing it to be only because of his skilled equestrian skills, "'Oh, it had nothing to do with luck,' he says arrogantly" (Potter, p. 262), Mr Darcy truly lives up to the impression he first gave during the ball in Meryton: "He was the proudest, most disagreeable

²¹ Levy, Pat. *Jane Austen* (London: Greenwich Exchange, 2008), 19.

man in the world, and every body hoped that he would never come there again” (Austen, p. 8).

While the author has modernized Mr Darcy when it seemed suitable, changing what would be his obvious reaction to a young woman travelling by herself, as well as not seeming to care about her family or place in society before starting an informal courtship, this changes during Emily and Mr Darcy’s fourth meeting,

‘You are employed?’ I look up to see Mr Darcy gazing at me in total astonishment. In fact, he’s looking more astonished at this suggestion than anything that’s happened these past few days (Potter, p. 266).

Emily also experiences how he has been raised, complete with old-fashioned manners and an awareness of his place in society. This contributes the support Mr Darcy’s arrogance and self-righteousness, which Emily is finding increasingly irritating, frustrating and unattractive:

Now it’s my turn to look at him is astonishment. ‘Servants’ was bad enough, but did he just say the *lower classes*? I look at him incredulously. I honestly can’t believe what I’m hearing. I knew he was posh, but I had no idea he was such a *snob*.
‘A woman’s place is in the home. As a wife and mother.’
Yes. He really did say that.
‘But that’s so sexist,’ I cry (Potter, p. 266).

Mr Darcy is a product of old money and English aristocracy, living in a time where the world was shrinking and changing, “Set in the closing years of the 18th century when the threat of a French invasion was very real, the story almost unperceptively draws a picture of social change” (Levy, p. 31). While not addressed directly in neither *Pride and Prejudice* nor *Me and Mr Darcy*, the aspects of new and old money, trade and landed gentry are present and a great part of the plots:

Pride and Prejudice is Jane Austen’s comic fantasy of the rejuvenation of an old way of life, the energy and vitality of a girl, not too unlike herself, being grafted into the class which determines and regulates the society that she sees fast fading away around her (Levy, p. 33).

One can also argue that Mr Darcy is subject to change, and his breaking with tradition, in both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Me and Mr Darcy*, and choosing a wife away from expectations and family, is his own subtle way to change along with society.

While this view on society and the class structure might be a very realistic aspect of Mr Darcy, his upbringing and his life at Pemberley, his blunt expression of his views on women’s role in society and dominant behaviour does differ from the kindness of Mr Darcy that the reader comes to discover in *Pride and Prejudice*. The Mr Darcy in *Me and Mr Darcy* has evolved to be crasser, bolder and more rigid than the one in *Pride and Prejudice*. One

might argue that Mr Darcy's true self comes through when he becomes more comfortable with his surroundings; in *Me and Mr Darcy* he becomes more proud, self-righteous and arrogant, while in *Pride and Prejudice*, he becomes softer, happier and kinder. This can also be why Elizabeth Bennet opened her heart to Mr Darcy when she visited Pemberley, she met him there where he was comfortable and safe, thus his true personality became apparent, and he was charming, kind and including (Austen, 244). When in the company of his younger sister, Georgiana, he is also gentle and protective, because she is the closest person in the world to him.

The crassness of Mr Darcy in *Me and Mr Darcy* causes him to be insulting to Emily's heritage and culture, causing arrogance to transgress into rude; "Obviously your customs are not the same in America,' he says gravely. 'But here we do things differently. And, I have to say, properly'" (Potter, p. 267). This exclamation of disapproval of Emily's nationality contrasts with his positive fascination by it during their first meeting, showing how the author changes Mr Darcy throughout the story, in order to make him fit in with other existing storylines.

As Mr Darcy progresses and changes throughout their meetings, Emily begins to reflect on the fantasy she and many others have created for themselves:

In *Pride and Prejudice* Jane Austen describes Mr Darcy as 'brooding', which *sounds* so attractive, but in truth it turns out it just means he's sulky; 'proud', I've fast come to realise, means sexist, and as for him appearing 'arrogant', in reality, what it really means is he's actually quite snobbish (Potter, p. 289).

Emily begins to see the downside of being with someone who is always composed and in control, which can be now interpreted as a lack of emotional range, even a lack of true affection:

His face pales and he struggles to repress his emotions. Watching him, I have a flashback to Spike losing his temper and part of me can't help wishing Mr Darcy would do the same. But of course he won't, he's always so goddamn composed the whole time. I used to think it was sexy, but now I just find it frustrating (Potter, p. 267).

Emily rejects Mr Darcy's proposal of marriage, because she has come to a realisation, which embodies the purpose of the Mr Darcy character portrayed in *Me and Mr Darcy*, that he is a fantasy:

I was in love with the idea of him and what he represented, but not the reality. Of course that doesn't mean I'm not attracted to him, who wouldn't be? As Stella said back in the bookstore, the man's a female wet dream. But how can anything live up to the airbrushed vision I've created in my head all these years? He can't. And he shouldn't be made to. Because that's the

thing about Mr Darcy – he’s a female fantasy. But that’s all he is, a fantasy. And that’s what he should remain (Potter, p. 289).

Through this realisation, the author speaks to the cult-movement relating to Mr Darcy that has appeared. *Me and Mr Darcy* uses these cults as a basis and setting in order to show how this obsession can be unhealthy, and create limits in the readers’ lives.

One specific aspect of Mr Darcy is re-imagined and re-written in the majority of spin-off novels related to *Pride and Prejudice*. Along with *Me and Mr Darcy*, spin-off novels re-write Mr Darcy’s apparent arrogance as humility and shyness. This reinterpretation becomes exceedingly apparent in the contrasts between Emily and Mr Darcy’s first meeting and Elizabeth and Mr Darcy’s first meeting. While Elizabeth is left with an impression of someone who is arrogant, proud and disagreeable, Emily is left with the impression of someone who is kind, humble and shy. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr Darcy’s evolves from proud and uncomfortable to gentle and uncomfortable, while in *Me and Mr Darcy* he makes a change in the opposite direction, from shy and kind to proud and arrogant. In *Me and Mr Darcy* there is also more inconsistency as to Mr Darcy’s character, as the author shifts the rigidity of the character in order to fit into the plot. This creates a more unpredictable Mr Darcy, and separates him from the Mr Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*.

In writing such a spin-off novel Alexandra Potter is able to take liberties with the character and plot, which she has done abundantly. Juliette Wells explains that; “Elements absent in Austen’s writings or kept to a minimum by her are made explicit and expanded to suit the taste of a particular group of present-day readers” (Wells, p. 177-178). In the case of *Me and Mr Darcy*, Potter has taken the aspect of Mr Darcy’s arrogance and what can be interpreted as sexism and enhanced this during parts of the novel where it helps the underlying plot. Furthermore, Potter has taken Mr Darcy’s desire to be in control and drawn focus to it. In *Pride and Prejudice*, one can argue that one of the reasons behind Mr Darcy’s obvious distress over his growing affections towards Elizabeth is because falling in love with her makes him lose control over himself and his emotions. It makes him vulnerable and perhaps even weak. This causes a classic head-versus-heart dilemma for Mr Darcy, which adds to his struggles with his love for Elizabeth. Another aspect of this is the increased satisfaction Mr Darcy will experience if or when he is able to control his emotions and remain dominant. In *Me and Mr Darcy*, this dominant need comes through when discussing the potential future. Mr Darcy is very determined in his own ways, not allowing Emily to have a desire nor an opinion on the subject (Potter, p. 264-266). While this passage in the novel

shows both the times Mr Darcy grew up in and his arrogance to, it also reveals his need to be in charge, and how negatively he reacts when he is challenged. The fact that he is being challenged by the object of his current affections makes the entire situation worse.

The approach Potter has taken to re-writing *Pride and Prejudice* has included taking the original novel apart²²:

As much more extreme reinventions than period sequels to or updated versions of Austen's novels, such hybrid works are especially revealing of what certain present-day amateur readers are willing to do to, and with, Austen (Wells, p. 178).

Potter has taken what she needs from characters, rewritten some aspects and even introduced the idea of what would have happened if Mr Darcy had met someone else while in London, never returned to Hertfordshire or never fallen in love with Elizabeth. Potter even indicates that one of the minor characters in *Me and Mr Darcy* is actually Jane Austen herself, pulling strings from behind the scenes, allowing Emily to have a first-hand encounter with Mr Darcy and explore the possibilities that would entail.

Allowing Mr Darcy to be inconsistent throughout the novel, along with the blank pages in Emily's book, gives the reader the impression that the characters are indeed alive and can truly change the course of literary history:

An author does not simply assemble a group of complete persons, like a group of accomplished actors waiting to go on stage, and then send them full-blown into the events of the fiction. Rather, there is an art by means of which we are caused to accumulate, more or less gradually, our sense of the character and his or her fitness for the job (Springer, p. 178).

Mr Darcy's seemingly changing mood and uncharacteristic actions underline the feeling of the character living a life of their own. Emily becomes aware of this throughout the novel, becoming worried for her favourite love-story's outcome if she continues to intervene. Emily knows that even though the novel has been written almost two hundred years ago, she can still have the power to change this reading by changing the outcome, showing that every reading of the novel is a new reading, and all the plot turns and twists are happening for the first time – every time the novel is being read. This relates to Iser's theory of reading and interpretation, how every reading of a text is a new reading, because of changes in expectations to the text and changed circumstances in the reader.

²² Another example of this is *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, a parody published in 2009, where Seth Graham-Smith has created a mashup novel of the classic story along with zombie fiction. Re-inventing Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy as zombie-hunters, the novel experiences mainstream success.

The changing of the outcome of *Pride and Prejudice* means, by extension, the changing of the character of Mr Darcy, showing how the reader brings life to a literary character while creating meaning in the text. A literary character changes throughout every reading, and also comes with his or her own set of expectations which can be altered through one reader or through several readings of the text. Thus a reader can reacquaint himself with a character through new readings of a text, and find the character be not what is expected or remembered from a previous reading:

My central argument will continue to be that character is not given to us like a gift in the hand, or like a picture on the wall, but that it does in fact accumulate. This must make perfect sense since the story, unlike the picture of the wall, moves across time – we must turn the page in order to find out what *else* there is to know about the character, what new actions and choices there may be to expand or modify our knowledge, what decisions we are to make about whether the character is fixed or in change, individual or antithetical to another character, minor or main (Springer, p. 179).

When Potter uses a well-known character such as Mr Darcy, and places him in a setting where there is a presumption of a previous knowledge of him, the fandom surrounding him and his origin, the optimal reader will have a sense of knowing how she should react and behave throughout the novel. By changing him from the character he is in *Pride and Prejudice*, Potter is allowing Mr Darcy to come more to life off the page, and to create anticipation around him. This could very well be deliberately by Potter, in order to both differentiate her Mr Darcy from the original Mr Darcy, both as a literary tool and as a means to re-invent him as a new character, inspired by the original:

As we turn the pages we may observe that the author is not only working with a governing principle for the whole, but with some specifiable arts which persuade us to make our decisions about both form and character accurately (Springer, p. 179).

By having Mr Darcy break with the presumptions of the reader, the reader is given an opportunity to get to know the character again, yet she is still inside the framework of a character that has already won the reader over:

Thus one rhetorical mode by which character makes itself known to us is a process of change, an action in which we accumulate our knowledge of character chiefly in the apprehension of a change – new decisions and acts of which the character was always inherently but not overtly capable (Springer, p. 181).

The challenge is to not break with the character the reader already knows, something which Potter is close to doing when having Mr Darcy seek out Emily for a night-time stroll.

Although fans of Austen seem to enjoy the re-writings of their favourite novel, there is a limit as to how far a new author can stray from the original:

Prospective readers of Austen fan fiction, including hybrids, perform their own informal version of a fair use test in order to decide whether or not to invest time and imagination in a certain work. Each reader has his or her own sense of what is “far enough from the original, or not too far” to give pleasure, and makes his or her own judgment of whether the foregrounding of a “covert” element is compelling or off-putting (Wells, p. 179).

Austen’s works are not ones to be the victim of ridicule, and they are treated with respect, and so are her characters (Wells, p. 180). While there have been adaptations and re-writings with a humorous side to them, such as *Fifty Shades of Mr Darcy* and *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, the original novel or original characters are not the ones being laughed at:

Pugh, writing in 2005, emphasizes the tendency of Austen fan fiction to conceive of their productions as tributes to their beloved author and, as a result, to voluntarily limit themselves in reconceiving her works (Wells, p. 180).

Me and Mr Darcy admires and respects *Pride and Prejudice* through its characters. The women Emily meets in the novel are all genuine Jane Austen fans, cherishing *Pride and Prejudice* and discussing the characters of Jane Austen as if they are close, personal friends. Mr Darcy is discussed as the perfect hero, and Elizabeth is the best friend they all wished they had.

The appearance of Jane Austen herself in *Me and Mr Darcy* shows how Potter uses Austen as well as Mr Darcy to further her plot, which is a feature used often by new authors of Austen literature:

Whether inventing scenes of sex, horror, or churchgoing to Austen and her characters, present-day creators exercise more ingenuity and audacity than ever before in reshaping Austen’s works, and in some cases her life as well, to suit their own sensibilities (Wells, p. 181).

In *Me and Mr Darcy*, Jane Austen lives on as a guardian angel, apparently seeking to help those who let their obsession with Mr Darcy affect and limit their lives in an unhealthy matter, and to help people find happiness. This position has been approached in the past:

As Marilyn Fancus has noted, a subgenre of recent novels about Austen fans concentrates on the rehabilitation of the addicted reader/viewer whose imagination has become too thoroughly permeated with Austen’s characters, particularly those of *Pride and Prejudice*. For those whose love of Austen becomes too strong, another avenue of escape depicted in film and fiction is time travel into the Regency, or into the world of *Pride and Prejudice* itself (Wells, p. 206).

The aspects of *Me and Mr Darcy* where Emily and Mr Darcy meet, there is indication of Emily being transported back to the Regency, with electricity being replaced by candles and a fire being made up in the fireplace. These may seem like small changes, yet the aspect of cross-over from the twenty-first century to the Regency period is not one that is being explored further. However, it does mean that Emily is meeting Mr Darcy on his own turf, and

that she is the one who is out of place. This could be seen as a connection to the power Mr Darcy holds over her, and Mr Darcy's need to be dominant. Everything surrounding Mr Darcy occurs on his terms, and his terms only.

While *Me and Mr Darcy* gives no straight answer to if Emily was truly transferred into the blank pages of *Pride and Prejudice*, or if the Mr Darcy she met was a hallucination caused by stress and desire, the character she meets is definitely a representation of herself, her fantasies and desires, which makes the character of Mr Darcy become just as much a representation of her:

Characters, then, can serve to reveal *other* characters – to make, by their own choices and acts, rhetorical judgments on the choices and acts of others. That is why James' conception of character as "picture" endangers our whole understanding of the rhetoric of character if we take it too literally. He knew what he meant by it, and knew that he did not mean to borrow by analogy either the necessary flatness or stillness of a "picture". But the metaphor is still a danger to us if it causes us to look upon character as something that strikes us all at once, or necessarily accumulates only out of its own description and activities. Wherever there are two or more characters there is a "dramatic situation" of some kind *interaction* reveals character, or where the mere juxtaposition of characters reveals character [...] (Springer, p. 191-192)

The Mr Darcy Emily meets changes along with her desire of what she needs and wants in that current situation. When Emily feels depressed and disappointed by the male company on the book tour, Mr Darcy appears as a charming counterpoint to that disappointment. Emily transfers her own underlying emotions on to her favourite literary character, indicating that he is a figment of her imagination, or even a coping mechanism for her insecurities and frustrations. Further, when Emily gains confidence and gains affection for Spike, Mr Darcy changes to proud and disagreeable, showing how Emily is ready to let go of the man she had placed on a pedestal for so long. Mr Darcy reflects Emily's feelings and needs, and she has used him as an excuse for everything that she feels is wrong with the men in her life.

The sexualisation of Mr Darcy and the exploration of Mr Darcy's sexual nature is an aspect of *Pride and Prejudice* that have been explored and focused on by several writers of Austen fan-fiction:

Several of the influential 1990's Austen film adaptations expanded the boundaries of Austen's treatment of bodies and desire. Most famously, the 1995 miniseries version of *Pride and Prejudice* depicted a fully physical Darcy, including views of him bathing, fencing, and – as no one needs reminding – arising from an impromptu swim at Pemberley to the astonishment of Elizabeth (Wells, p. 181-182).

The famous lake-scene from this BBC adaptation is one that is very popular amongst fan writers, and one that is also much discussed by the women in *Me and Mr Darcy* (Potter, p. 56). The scene is also used as a backdrop for Emily and Mr Darcy's final meeting:

I turn them over in my mind and am about to say something when I am distracted by what looks like someone swimming in the lake. Surely not – it's *January*. I crinkle up my forehead and squint to see better. The swimmer is pulling himself out of the water. Christ, he's still in his clothes. He must be *freezing*. You can see his nipples from here, right through his white shirt that's wet through and clinging to his chest...
Holy shit. It's the famous lake scene. Except it's not Colin Firth...
'It's Mr Darcy,' I gasp, before I can help myself (Potter, p. 294).

The BBC adaptation inspired a whole new wave of Jane Austen readers, and is frequently referenced throughout popular culture. This scene is the one that truly made Mr Darcy an object of sexual and romantic desire for many readers, including the readers in *Me and Mr Darcy*, and by using this scene as a meeting between Emily and Mr Darcy, Potter brings two different adaptations and two different mediums together, showing that the BBC adaptation and the lake scene have almost gathered the same amount of fame and following as *Pride and Prejudice* itself, along with being one of the most important aspects of the fantasy of Mr Darcy. Uniquely, this scene is absent in *Pride and Prejudice*, yet has become a part of the culture surrounding it to such a degree that the two are thought of as one.

The lack of sexual contact and the interpretation of sexual metaphors have been explored by both fans and scholars, focusing on how physical attraction is presented in a Regency novel, and especially through Mr Darcy and Elizabeth:

There is very little physical contact in *Pride and Prejudice* but there are glances, blushes, haughty expressions and arch looks, even a dirty petticoat. The lives of these characters are carried out in public spaces – drawing rooms, assembly halls, country lanes – and there is very little opportunity for closeness. Elizabeth and Darcy's love affair is one of looks and language rather than physical proximity (Levy, p. 30).

The absence of physical contact can be interpreted as romantic, and even more intense than the alternative, that the love that comes from this is a truer love than one based on physical attraction, and how this love differs from the romantic notion of today's readers has also been discussed. The love between Mr Darcy and Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice* is based on security and admiration of character, not physical attraction:

When Elizabeth comes to realise that she loves Darcy and could make him a good wife, it is the material reality she thinks about rather than the physical attractions of the man, his power and influence and his wit and liveliness (Wells, p. 31).

The romantic love that is often sought after and which is the focus of love stories today, and which is a popular topic between the characters in *Me and Mr Darcy*, might not be the love actually intended between Mr Darcy and Elizabeth. This notion is backed up by the fact that Elizabeth's affections for Mr Darcy first started warming when she visited his estate of Pemberley, "It is at Pemberley that he becomes an attractive figure, both to the reader and to

Elizabeth. He becomes a good landlord and master through the report of his housekeeper” (Levy, p. 30). At Pemberley, Elizabeth sees the security and opportunities Mr Darcy truly has to offer, along with the softer side of his personality that has previously been shielded from her by her presumptive judgements and his pride.

The Proposal

Visiting the estate of Pemberley, or in the case of *Me and Mr Darcy*, the estate used for Pemberley in the BBC adaptation, marks a turning point for both Emily and Elizabeth, albeit in very different ways. While Elizabeth experiences seeing Mr Darcy in a more flattering light, allowing her to open herself to him and his affections, Emily uses Pemberley as place to depart from her relationship and fixation with Mr Darcy. Emily both rejects Mr Darcy’s proposal there, and comes to a personal realization about her own unhealthy obsession with a literary character.

When Emily meets the other women in *Me and Mr Darcy*, she finds herself embarrassed by the age-differences between them. Emily is in her late twenties, while the other women are around the age of retirement. She quickly comes to the realization, however, that their common interest, and appreciation of Jane Austen literature, surpasses their age-differences, which is an aspect looked at by theorists. Austen unites fans of all ages from all over the world:

Recently, novelists have explored further how people of different ages, genders, and nationalities connect with each other through devotion to Austen. Most potently, as imagined by some writers, a deep appreciation for Austen can bring together amateur and academic readers, across the great gulf of attitude and language that has long separates these two groups (Wells, p. 206-207).

In this way, Potter uses the women in *Me and Mr Darcy* in order to show the timelessness of *Pride and Prejudice* along with the timelessness of Mr Darcy and his allure to women of all ages. The women in *Me and Mr Darcy* bond over their common interest and reading habits, and the novel ends with suggestions that the women have formed life-long friendships and business partnerships. Emily herself is made aware of the connection between the women when they start discussing the famous lake scene how they are attracted to Mr Darcy (Potter, p. 56).

A similarity between many spin-off novels of *Pride and Prejudice* is a variety of the famous opening line, “It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife” (Austen, p. 3). This line has become both a

representation of Austen's wit and irony as an author, and of the worry and ambition of girls who, like the Bennet sisters, had very limited options besides marrying a man with the means to support her. In *Pride and Prejudice* this view and ambition is best personified through the never subtle Mrs Bennet, and while her eldest daughters in particular do not seem to share her views, the prospect of marriage is never any less on their mind to some degree. One factor in *Pride and Prejudice* is the question of whether any marriage is better than no marriage at all, which Elizabeth directly addresses when turning down Mr Collins' offer of marriage. While Elizabeth decides to wait for love before she marries, this is not a requisite for everybody in her time. For characters such as Mrs Bennet, being married is the same as being happy. Although happiness is not necessarily about being in a loving marriage, happiness can be being content, and having security and stability, such as with Charlotte Lucas and Mr Collins, who have a marriage based on convenience instead of love. The first line in *Me and Mr Darcy*, "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single girl in possession of her right mind must be in want of a decent man" (Potter, p. 1), switches these roles, yet the irony is not quite as obvious in this version. Potter uses what can be interpreted as a new concern for women in a modern world. Women no longer need to rely on a man or a dowry in order to find security in life, yet marriage, and the fear of loneliness, is still a part of their lives. Emily wants a man who is *decent*, revealing aspects of her character along with the character of the Mr Darcy she eventually meets. Emily wants a man who will treat her with respect and love, which she sees in how Mr Darcy treats Elizabeth Bennet. However, she ends up rejecting Mr Darcy, finding the flaws of his character, despite his decency.

The first proposal Mr Darcy presents Elizabeth Bennet with in *Pride and Prejudice* shows the insecurity Mr Darcy is harbouring, an insecurity in which many authors find the inspiration to re-write as humility. Yet, this scene also shows off some of Mr Darcy's genuine arrogance.

He sat down for a few moments, and then getting up walked about the room. Elizabeth was surprised, but said not a word. After a silence of several minutes he came towards her in an agitated manner, and thus began (Austen, p. 125).

Mr Darcy's restlessness and agitation show how nervous he is, and this is the first point in *Pride and Prejudice* where the reader truly sees Mr Darcy in a position where he does not have control over the situation. He is aware of the fact that he is letting his guard down and putting himself in a very vulnerable position, and he does not handle it well. This also indicates to the reader that he is not sure of how Elizabeth will react to his proposal, and if she

will even accept him at all. Mr Darcy is a man who is not accustomed to experiencing rejection, entering into a situation where this might be a possibility is very unusual for him, ““In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. [...]” (Austen, p. 125), Elizabeth’s rejection of Mr Darcy contrasts with her rejection of Mr Collins’ proposal a few months earlier, both leaving Elizabeth insulted and disappointed. While Mr Darcy’s proposal is meant as a compliment of sorts from him, he fails to see how insulting it is to Elizabeth. While Mr Darcy intended to tell Elizabeth how he cannot help loving her, what he actually says is that he loves her even though he does not wish too. He would prefer it if he did not love her. This shows how uncomfortable Mr Darcy is in a position where he does not have superiority, and discomfort shown by Mr Darcy gives the reader the impression that he did not have great hopes of marrying for love.

The proposal made by Mr Darcy to Emily in *Me and Mr Darcy* distinguishes itself from the one in *Pride and Prejudice*. The circumstances differ greatly, and it appears slightly unbelievable for Mr Darcy to propose marriage to a woman he has known such a short time, who varies from everything he has been brought up to believe about society, and whose family and daily life he knows very little about. The proposal itself is a lot less formal than the one Elizabeth was presented with, with Mr Darcy interrupting Emily mid-sentence, presuming that she was about to admit her affections for him, when she was in fact going to tell him she did not wish to pursue a relationship with him:

But before I get a chance to speak, Mr Darcy says, ‘I feel exactly the same way. I too have something I need to tell you, something very important, something that I cannot hide from you another minute longer....’ (Potter, p. 299)

The presumption that Emily had fallen in love with him, and wished for a life with him, shows the reader that Mr Darcy still has some arrogance. Mr Darcy sees himself in a flattering light in this situation, being well aware of the prospects he is able to offer Emily. Adding to his arrogance, what reason could she have for turning him down?

During the proposal, Mr Darcy announces his affections for Emily with determination, expecting a heartfelt response from her, and when she declares she does not return his feelings, he appears “more than a little miffed” (Potter, p. 300). Mr Darcy’s proposal gives Emily one last, very vivid, opportunity to indulge in the fantasy she has about Mr Darcy and the role of the perfect man:

And for a brief, magical moment I wonder what might happen if I were to change my mind. If I were to tell him I love him. If I were to choose the fantasy over reality. It’s so close I can almost touch it with my fingertips (Potter, p. 300).

In order to convince Mr Darcy that they should not marry, Emily chooses to plant the notion of Elizabeth Bennet in Mr Darcy's mind, thus attempting to have the events of *Pride and Prejudice* play out. This indicates that Emily actually plays a role in letting the story of *Pride and Prejudice* progress or even take place at all. Throughout *Me and Mr Darcy*, Emily has both been reading and experiencing the plot of *Pride and Prejudice*, and starts tying this together after she pushes Mr Darcy back in the right direction. Emily is experiencing the novel she knows so well in a whole new light, and after having taken the role of Elizabeth, judging and making opinions about people and situations without having the whole story, she gains a whole new insight to the novel. She will read it with newfound affection from that moment on.

Pre-mature judgement is an aspect of both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Me and Mr Darcy*. All characters are placed into categories when introduced to the reader, and both novels are set in different, yet quite narrow communities,

The sensitive and witty Elizabeth is surrounded by snobbery and crassness and has only her angelic sister, who refuses to believe ill of anyone, and her cynical, withdrawn father to share her ideas with. Her mother is a fool, her sisters badly brought up, her best friend takes a dolt for a husband in the sure knowledge of what she is doing, and her aunt is a well-meaning but silly gossip. [...] With the addition of a wealthy young man and his family and friend, the tiny community's horizons are suddenly expanded far beyond the small social round of everyday life (Levy, p. 20).

Mr Darcy and Mr Bingley turn the community into turmoil, changing the prospects of many and the lives of few. Similarly, in *Me and Mr Darcy*, the appearance of Mr Darcy changes Emily's views on life, love and opens her eyes to new opportunities. Mr Darcy changes the lives of both Elizabeth and Emily, albeit in very different ways.

Anachronisms

A common challenge for many authors of spin-off fiction is the balancing between the Regency-period character, and the modern fantasy. By introducing modern elements to a character, either deliberately or by accident, the author creates anachronisms in the text, which can create inconsistencies in the text and an unreliable character. The second meeting between Emily and Mr Darcy marks a definite point where the author has taken great liberties in the portrayal of Mr Darcy, and how he has been changed to fit more into modern romantic fantasies than staying true to his time and place as portrayed in *Pride and Prejudice*. In the second meeting between Emily and Mr Darcy, he differs greatly from what can be expected of the Mr Darcy of *Pride and Prejudice*,

Taking off his top hat, he rakes his fingers through his shock of black hair. 'I'm not entirely sure,' he admits. 'I was taking a walk by your hotel and I happened to see you in the window. I wanted to catch your attention...' He pauses and bows his head. 'Please forgive the impropriety' (Potter, p. 154).

While the notion of a moonlight walk with the man of your dreams would be exceedingly romantic for many women of the twenty-first century, a man of Mr Darcy's upbringing would not agree to such. The notion that Mr Darcy would make contact with and suggest that a woman dressed in her night-clothes come and join him for a midnight walk seems very unlikely. For the Mr Darcy from *Pride and Prejudice*, those actions would be indecent and unheard of. The author has lost the authenticity of her character by attempting to make him more romantic for the modern audience.

The attempt to make Mr Darcy more related to a modern fantasy is also present during Mr Darcy's proposal to Emily. Mr Darcy begins his proposal of marriage by dropping to one knee before her. This action was not performed by Mr Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, setting a bold distinction between the two. Mr Darcy from *Me and Mr Darcy*'s proposal seems more fitting in a twenty-first century setting than during the Regency period. He has become too modern. When he officially declares his love for Emily, the change from a Regency man is clear: "That is what I love so much about you, Emily, you are always so sweet and thoughtful and amusing" (Potter, p. 299).

In both novels Mr Darcy is a man whom the other characters have strong opinions about. Whether the opinions are positive or negative, both societies surrounding him have a very clear impression on who he is and what he stands for. The judging society of Meryton (Levy, p. 27) are almost all wrong, many people finding Mr Darcy disagreeable and proud, and believing the tales told by Mr Wickham, who gives off a much more charming first impression. The women in *Me and Mr Darcy* also have very firm opinions of him, yet these are all of positive nature. They find him kind and generous and the perfect fantasy, yet Emily experiences how this is not the case, and how the fantasy is many times better than the reality she experiences. In both novels, people's opinions of Mr Darcy are not entirely correct.

Austen reveals her characters through them speaking, not allowing for any information to be superfluous. The characters reveal themselves through their words, while in *Me and Mr Darcy* this is not the case. In this novel the characters reveal themselves through the other characters relating to them;

Literary characters are initially confined by being made of word constructs (scene, thought, description, imagery). And they are released to us, made known to us as one kind of person rather than another, by the story's "kinetic elements" – dialogue, acts, and events, and cumulate patterns of events. Form is being formed by these active elements, much more surely than by words (Springer, p. 180).

In both novels, the character of Mr Darcy is seen through the eyes of another, creating the reader's opinion for them, leading them through their own experience, and in both novels, the character of Mr Darcy is hard to know on his own;

Darcy, it has been noted by critics, is a mere shadow of a man, far less clearly drawn than Wickham. We are told he is Elizabeth's perfect mate and his actions show that he really wants her for his wife. He, like Elizabeth, recognises that theirs will be a beneficial partnership. But he is essentially a remote figure (Levy, p. 30).

Mr Darcy is distant and quiet, more so in *Pride and Prejudice* than in *Me and Mr Darcy*. This means that the little he does say is what the reader has to use to create an opinion of him, leading to misunderstandings from both the reader and the characters. The changes Mr Darcy experiences during *Pride and Prejudice* are marked by few words, or by silence:

He seems proud to say, "My good opinion once lost is lost for ever", or to comment that Elizabeth is tolerable but not enough to tempt him to dance. His proposal to Elizabeth is haughty and proud and insulting (Levy, p. 30).

The few words he utters during his first meeting with the people of Meryton are not positive, and he ends up insulting several people. What comes to light about him is not through what he says, but what other say about him;

The few intimate conversations with Elizabeth reveal little more about him, and even Elizabeth cannot look at him during his second proposal. But he is humbled, and ready to accept the evil Wickham and still worse, Mrs Bennet, as his relations (Levy, p. 30).

Mr Darcy's redemptions and heroic actions are once more not uttered by Mr Darcy himself, but through letters and correspondence between the other characters. His character is still surrounded by silence, and he is still in the shadows. Mr Darcy is a character who drives the entire story forwards from the background, which one could argue is one of the reasons why fan-fiction telling his side of events has become so popular. There are great spaces in the text where the reader can fill in how they imagine Mr Darcy, which the characters in *Pride and Prejudice* also do; "His later heroic actions are reported to us and Elizabeth in a letter and his return to Longbourne is marked with more silence" (Levy, p. 30). The spaces in the text can be related to Iser's theory on gaps in the text, and how these gaps are where the reader creates the literary response. The author creates a new story within the months where Mr Darcy was absent from Hertfordshire, creating a new story in their own image. Thus the meeting of the gaps in the text, and the reader, is the point of inspiration and creation for the new text.

Austen has created a character that has inspired reader to create their own versions of them, re-writing and re-imagining them in their own vision;

Austen's characters has inspired such widespread affection by this date that there was a craving to give them a concrete shape, to 'fix' the best-loved of them in the public mind's eye, in the way that modern film and television versions of the novels vie with each other through more and more ingenious or desperate casting to get just the 'right' Emma Woodhouse or Elizabeth Bennet or Anne Elliot, or the right one for the audience of the moment.²³

While it can be argued that these new authors are not actually creating new characters, they do take something beloved and established and use it for inspiration for a new character and new story. While Mr Darcy in both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Me and Mr Darcy* are supposed by Potter to be the same character, they are in fact not. The character in *Me and Mr Darcy* is a manifestation of a fantasy created by one reader, and differs greatly from the original. Potter has modernized him and made him more daring and rebellious, making him break away from the original character. Potter has truly created a Mr Darcy that relates little to the one in *Pride and Prejudice*.

²³ Claire Harman, *Jane's Fame. How Jane Austen Conquered the World*. (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2009), 159

Chapter 2: The Darcys of Pemberley

*The Darcys of Pemberley*²⁴ separates itself from the other novels in this thesis by not directly relating itself to the events in *Pride and Prejudice*, and instead focuses on creating a new chapter for Mr Darcy and Elizabeth – what happens after the wedding. The novel explores their married life, and imagines the struggles and joys they would possibly experience. The novel begins with a quick, third person summary of the events of *Pride and Prejudice*, giving the reader the impression the author has not written *The Darcys of Pemberley* with the intention that the reader has read *Pride and Prejudice*, and thus does not have a clear image or impression of who Mr Darcy is or what can be expected from him in terms of morals and behaviour.

Plot introduction

The novel is set mostly in Derbyshire, at the Pemberley estate, starting up a few months after the wedding between Mr Darcy and Elizabeth. Mr Darcy and Elizabeth have now settled in at their estate, “A bright and spirited young woman, she is now Mrs. Darcy and resides with her illustrious husband at Pemberley, the finest estate in Derbyshire” (Winslow, p. 2). There is mention of how well of a marriage Elizabeth had made, considering what her prospects had been, being one of five daughters.

Following the style of *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Darcys of Pemberley* is told from the perspective of Elizabeth Bennet, giving the reader an insight into her opinions of both characters and ongoing events, including the character of Mr Darcy. An insight into both Mr Darcy’s sense of loyalty and devotion to his wife is first made present during the first event in the novel, the funeral of Mr. Collins. Since his engagement with Elizabeth was made official, Mr Darcy had no contact with his aunt, who did not approve of the relationship, and there is no indication of a future reconciliation: “No one present interested Lady Catherine, most especially since she was not on speaking terms with her nephew, Mr Darcy, and steadfastly refused to acknowledge the existence of his wife” (Winslow, p. 8). Mr Darcy has chosen his wife over the very little family he has left.

The novel explores the marriage of Mr Darcy and Elizabeth, and the lives of the people around them. Elizabeth and Jane both become pregnant during the novel, with Jane

²⁴ Shannon Winslow, *The Darcys of Pemberley* (Lexington: Heather Ridge Arts, 2011)

giving birth to twins a few months before Elizabeth gives birth to a boy. The prospects of marriage for Georgiana and Anne de Bourgh are examined, with Georgiana experiencing heartbreak over her feelings towards Colonel Fitzwilliam, who becomes engaged to Anne. The marriage between Anne and Colonel Fitzwilliam is one of convenience, since Anne has very few prospects and is still expected to marry someone of nobility, and Colonel Fitzwilliam should marry a woman with a personal fortune. Luckily for Georgiana, Anne de Bourgh makes the decision to stand up to her mother's expectations, and marry her physician, Dr Essex. This leaves Col. Fitzwilliam free to marry Georgiana.

Mr Wickham and Lydia are the main points of concern for Mr Darcy and Elizabeth throughout the novel, with them having spent all their money and are now back in Hertfordshire and Derbyshire in order to find a family member who can be manipulated into supporting them. Through the discovery of Lydia's talent for forging Elizabeth's handwriting, Mr Wickham manipulates Mr Darcy into believing Elizabeth's relationship with Mr Wickham before her marriage was a much more intimate one than it first appeared. Through this, Mr Wickham manages to manipulate Mr Darcy into giving him large sums of money, and setting them up on a separate cottage on the Pemberley estate. After Mr Wickham's fraud is discovered, Mr Wickham tricks Elizabeth into following him down to their cottage, and attempts to rape and murder her. Thankfully for Elizabeth, she manages to stab Mr Wickham with a pocket-knife, before they lose control of the carriage and fall into a nearby ditch.

During the funeral of Mr. Collins, the reader is also been made aware of Mr Darcy's generosity towards his friends and the friends of his wife, offering his services to the newly made widow;

"Mrs. Collins, my sincere condolences," said Darcy, taking Charlotte's offered hand. "I would by no means wish to intrude upon your private sorrow. Only allow me say that my wife and I shall consider it a great honor if, should you find yourself in need, you were to think of us first. Should there be any service I might render you, please do not hesitate to make it known to me" (Winslow, p. 8).

While Mr. Collins was not a favourite of Mr Darcy, Mr Darcy does not keep this from showing kindness and support to his widow, although one might debate whether Mr Darcy had shown this kindness if Mrs Collins not been a close friend of his wife.

One aspect in *Pride and Prejudice* that is often brought up in spin-off fiction is Mr Darcy's pride and arrogance towards the people of Hertfordshire. A popular interpretation of this pride is Mr Darcy's insecurity in social situations, and his discomfort away from his

home. This interpretation is made in both *Me and Mr Darcy* and *The Darcys of Pemberley*.

This interpretation makes Mr Darcy seem a lot more agreeable and sympathetic, and it softens him as a character;

How little she had understood his reserved nature when they first met. She blushed now to remember how she censured him for pride and arrogance – not wholly undeserved – whilst her own conduct was equally at fault. What if they had never overcome those early misunderstandings? It could so easily have happened. No doubt most men would have walked away for good upon being so soundly refused. Elizabeth shuddered at the very idea (Winslow, p. 13).

This is also the interpretation being made in *The Darcys of Pemberley*, giving Elizabeth the role of Mr Darcy's security and saviour when she can sense Mr Darcy's discomfort;

Elizabeth then turned to locate her husband. He was never completely comfortable in this sort of situation, and she did not wish to disconcert him unnecessarily by neglect. She spied him across the way, standing alone, patiently watching her. A tall man with noble mien, she admired him immensely, and he grew more handsome in her estimation month by month (Winslow, p. 11).

The author also uses this situation to show the love Elizabeth has for her husband, and giving the reader an indication that Mr Darcy is a man to be admired, and who has a clear high standing in society.

Mr Darcy and Sex

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth truly allows herself to love Mr Darcy when she sees him in his own element, at the lavish estate of Pemberley. The estate is renowned across Derbyshire for its splendour, and Elizabeth is the mistress of the estate that constantly reminds her of the first time she was made privy to see her husband's true nature, to see through his proud and arrogant exterior, and to see the man that the tenants and employees of the estate saw, a fair, kind and caring man;

Elizabeth said this with her own experience in mind, recalling how different Mr Darcy seemed when she encountered him at Pemberley for the first time. By then, some of her previous misconceptions about him had been banished, and he had deliberately amended his manners. Yet that could not explain the transformation entirely. Even now, she could see the change in him at home compared to away. Away from Pemberley, her husband was never totally at ease, and his rigid constraint too often apt to be interpreted as false pride by those who did not know him well. Contrariwise, at home, there was none of that awkwardness; he was cordial to guests and visitors, liberal with his servants and tenants, and comfortable within himself (Winslow, p. 109).

Through this passage, Winslow has rewritten the events in *Pride and Prejudice*, by having Mr Darcy be uncomfortable instead of proud, in a similar way to how Potter rewrote Mr Darcy's pride in *Me and Mr Darcy*. To create a Mr Darcy that is shy instead of arrogant and proud creates a more sympathetic character for the reader to identify with.

While their relationship in *Pride and Prejudice* was complicated and went through several challenges, very little was said about any form of physical relationship between the two, and as far as the reader is concerned, Elizabeth and Mr Darcy did not so much as hold hands before they were married. In *The Darcys of Pemberley*, this relationship is explored thoroughly, taking from a different popular branch of *Pride and Prejudice* spin-off and fan-fiction, erotic fiction;

As their eyes met, a familiar, knowing look passed between them, causing her to take a sharp breath and feel a quickening of her heart. With private delight, she noted that nearly a year of marriage had, if anything increased rather than diminished his power to affect her in this way. Elizabeth had no means of perceiving it, but at that moment Mr Darcy entertained similarly pleasant thoughts about her (Winslow, p. 11).

The author wishes to portray the relationship between Mr Darcy and Elizabeth as both flirtatious and passionate;

A fine supper had been prepared that evening for the master and his bride, to which they did not do justice. The delicately roasted quail had gone untouched; the parsley potatoes failed to hold their interest; they drank their wine but hardly tasted it. The cook was not to blame, nor was she much offended that the couple's appetites were so thoroughly engaged elsewhere. Ultimately, Mr. and Mrs. Darcy abandoned their dinner and moved to the bedchamber for the much-anticipated main course of the evening, which turned out more to their liking (Winslow, p. 13-14).

While this might seem like unnecessary information to the reader, or as if the author is mixing in one genre with the next, it also underlines what kind of relationship Mr Darcy and Elizabeth have, one where they are able to enjoy one another without any other reason than their attraction and love for one another, which might not necessarily be a requirement for a marriage entered into during that time. Throughout the course of events in *The Darcys of Pemberley*, Mr Darcy is constantly giving his wife signs of affection, "In response, Darcy settled a rug over their laps and his arm about her shoulders" (Winslow, p. 13).

The romantic and sexually aware Mr Darcy is a good example of the author's attempt to make Mr Darcy more modern, more relating to a modern fantasy and more intriguing to the author, although one can argue whether the Mr Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* would truly have taken part in such compromising and explicit behaviour;

Taking her words as an invitation, he snatched his wife into his arms. He would have given her a little 'amusement' right then and there, had not the footman opened the door prematurely. 'Confound it,' Darcy muttered under his breath, loosening his hold (Winslow, p. 15).

This draws links to the modernizing of the Regency-man being made in *Me and Mr Darcy*. Both novels introduce modern flirtatious behaviour to the character, in attempts to make him more likeable with the contemporary audience. The man who is suddenly very willing to

display what would have been quite startling, appears very different from the man who once convinced his friend to stop a future relationship with a woman he cared for because of her family;

-These causes must be stated, though briefly. –The situation of your mother’s family, though objectionable, was nothing in comparison of that total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed by herself, by your three younger sisters, and occasionally even your father (Austen, p. 130-131).

This unlikely change in character can also be said for Elizabeth, and her blatant flirtatious teasing of Mr Darcy. Considering her embarrassment over Lydia’s behaviour towards the soldiers in Meryton, and her sub-sequent scandalous affair with Mr Wickham, it would be more reasonable for Elizabeth to attempt to regain some class and elegance after her marriage, especially after marrying an admired man such as Mr Darcy and being made the mistress of an estate such as Pemberley. The author has attempted to create a very modern love-story for the couple, and even attempting to recreate Mr Darcy and Elizabeth as the perfect couple, completely compatible for each other;

There, she knew, she would be perfectly safe, since Darcy took meticulous care to preserve his dignified demeanour in front of the servants. This fact made him an irresistibly easy target for her sport, the brunt of which he bore tolerably well. He would simply bide his time, content in the knowledge that he would receive his recompense later when they were alone, which was the most *amusing* part of the game (Winslow, p.15).

Winslow has attempted to achieve a combination of the Regency-gentleman and a modern man desperately attracted to his wife, which has the effect of separating him from the character in *Pride and Prejudice*.

The author has created an image of Mr Darcy and Elizabeth having a private and a public life, with their private life being a private joke between the couple, giving them the ability to tease and excite each other in the company of others, while retaining their composure, “In their private sanctuary, Darcy relaxed his stately persona, and Elizabeth felt free to lavish affection on him in ways more explicit than permitted in public” (Winslow, p. 16).

Winslow takes liberties in interpreting the events and relationships in *Pride and Prejudice*, namely the development of the relationship between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy, interpreting the confrontations and dislike initially between them to be actions of attraction:

From the time they met, there existed no shortage of heat between them, although it had at first been misdirected into confrontation. After their marriage, that fire naturally channelled into more satisfying pursuits. Darcy certainly expected to find this aspect of married life rewarding. Elizabeth had been less confident going in, considering the warning hints and

ambiguous information she received on the topic from her mother. Yet, resolved to keep an open mind, she had been gratified, and not a little surprised, to discover that her own extensive investigation into the matter reached such a happy conclusion (Winslow, p. 16).

By allowing the couple to be aware of their struggles and difficulties during the process of their courtship, Winslow also creates an opportunity for Mr Darcy to underline for the readers the security and home he has created for his wife, further proving his love for her and his desire to protect her:

“You should not upset yourself by dwelling on such gloomy reflections, my love.” Darcy urged, drawing Elizabeth closer and stroking her hair. “Here, with you, I shall always be, so far as it is within my control. We must trust to God for the rest” (Winslow, p. 17).

Mr Darcy’s need for control is a personality trait that is also focused on by Potter in *Me and Mr Darcy*. Mr Darcy is used to being in a position of power, using this to protect what he cares for the most, which is his family. This contrasts with the need for control in *Me and Mr Darcy*, where the indication is more that Mr Darcy becomes anxious when losing control over a situation.

Winslow has taken several aspects of fan-fiction and spin-off themes in order to create a Mr Darcy that is both a modern hero and the classic, brooding character that the reader knows from *Pride and Prejudice*, “Darcy sat transfixed, as she always did when his wife played and sang” (Winslow, p. 20). Mr Darcy has become a classic gentleman, romantic lover, trusted landlord and devoted husband all at once:

Next morning, the couple lingered lazily in bed, reluctant to forfeit its lavish comfort for the responsibilities that awaited them. Darcy absently twisted the loose waves of his wife’s chestnut hair round his fingers while she, nestled up against him, pondered the dancing light and shadow patterns cast by the lace curtains upon the wall (Winslow, p. 32).

There is never an opportunity lost to show the affect Elizabeth has on Mr Darcy, which makes a play to show the hold Elizabeth has on her husband, and which further underlines the female fantasy the author is attempting to create - A man who is powerless in the presence of the woman of his desire, “If you persist in tempting me, I shall not be answerable for my actions” (Winslow, p. 61).

Apart from the overly sexual Mr Darcy, the author has also created a Mr Darcy who is romantic and caring towards his wife,

Elizabeth’s slumber did not remain tranquil, however. After only half an hour, a series of plaintive moans and violent starts gave evidence of her growing unrest. Darcy’s normal reserve quickly dissolved. Entirely forgetting his sister-in-law’s presence, he stroked Elizabeth’s hair and whispered words of comfort in her ear, attempting to soothe his wife back into a more easy sleep. It was of no use. Finally, when he could bear her distress no longer, he gently roused her (Winslow, p. 188).

Mr Darcy experiences physical and mental discomfort when his wife is ill or has a nightmare, and this is one of the rare occasions when Mr Darcy does not care who sees him publically care and worry for his wife;

Kitty silently took in the scene, her eyes wide with alarm over her sister's state and also in wonderment at witnessing the intimate exchange between husband and wife. This unguarded glimpse of married life, and of her forbidding brother-in-law, came as quite a revelation to her. She was both embarrassed and fascinated to see it (Winslow, p. 188).

For Kitty, this might very well be the first time she is witness to the intense love and devotion between Mr Darcy and Elizabeth, and Mr Darcy shows how the most important thing in the world to him is his wife's health and happiness, truly embracing the role of romantic hero.

In *The Darcys of Pemberley* the reader is also given a small insight into a softer Mr Darcy when he is around his friends. While we do see a small part of this when Mr Darcy is with Mr. Bingley, who he has known for years and is comfortable around, he is a very different person when he is in the presence of Colonel Fitzwilliam. Mr Darcy becomes more relaxed, even playing the victim to Fitzwilliam's jokes made on his expense, "Darcy merely rolled his eyes heavenward and pretended not to hear what Fitzwilliam said entirely for his benefit" (Winslow, p. 38). The Mr Darcy created in *Me and Mr Darcy* does not seem to inhabit this sense of humour, being oblivious to Emily's joking or sarcasm.

The relationship between Mr Darcy and Colonel Fitzwilliam is a very close one, and Fitzwilliam can be said to be the closest Mr Darcy has to a brother. Fitzwilliam and Mr Darcy even share the guardianship of Georgiana. It is thus natural for Mr Darcy to be sceptical when Fitzwilliam suddenly becomes engaged to someone whom he has shown no obvious romantic affections for earlier, "Darcy and Elizabeth's thoughts were chiefly occupied with the knowledge that Anne's arrival with the colonel might well signify an alliance in which they themselves could take no joy" (Winslow, p. 66). While not being unpleasant regarding the relationship between Anne de Bourgh and Colonel Fitzwilliam, Mr Darcy does bring up concerns regarding Fitzwilliam's intentions and prospects for happiness, while Elizabeth is concerned because of Georgiana's reaction to the news, seeing that she is harbouring romantic feelings towards Fitzwilliam.

Mr Darcy and Georgiana

Mr Darcy's care and affection also extends to his ward and precious sister, Georgiana, and Mr Darcy is shown to have a great deal of worry for her, especially as she is reaching of

age and is being prepared for London society and for a prospective marriage. Undoubtedly, this worry comes from her previous experience with Mr. Wickham, which was a large part of the misunderstandings between Mr Darcy and Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice*. After the incident with Mr Wickham, Mr Darcy become extremely aware of the dangers a girl such as Georgiana could be victim of:

Always careful with his charge, Darcy learnt to be even more protective after a nearly disastrous brush with a fortune hunter – the same Mr. Wickham who was now, unhappily, his brother-in-law on Elizabeth's side.

Although he took every reasonable precaution, the danger remained, and he would not be completely easy until his responsibility for his sister was fully discharged by seeing her respectably married and settled (Winslow, p. 14).

The experience between Georgiana and Mr Wickham changed Mr Darcy, and made him very protective of his younger sister, as well as very sceptical to any suitors she may have, “Her brother always preferred this sort of social intercourse to occur under his watchful eye, within his sphere of control” (Winslow, p. 59). Georgiana also obviously still holds on to shame for her past indiscretions, keeping her from informing her brother of her growing affections for Colonel Fitzwilliam, both because of her own confusion surrounding these emotions, and fear of her brother's reaction to the news.

The affection and pride Mr Darcy has for his sister also reveals his pride in his own heritage and family, which adds to the question of why Mr Darcy takes so lightly on his personal strain with his relationship with his aunt, “‘You are a Darcy, Georgiana. Remember that and all will be well,’ her brother told her firmly, only adding to her consternation” (Winslow, p. 62). Showing the reader that he does in fact have a sense of pride towards himself, his position and his name, Mr Darcy is unable to relate to how ‘being a Darcy’ is not a great deal of comfort to his sister, it might in fact be intimidating to have such high expectations hanging over her, especially considering how close she was to bringing shame over her family name by eloping with Mr Wickham a few years earlier.

Georgiana's previous indiscretions have made Mr Darcy more protective of Georgiana than he probably would have been otherwise, something which becomes troubling when it is time for Georgiana to be introduced to society and to make the first steps towards finding a husband. This subject becomes a source of worry and stress for Mr Darcy, considering “[...] his personal distaste for the ‘marriage market’ atmosphere of these gatherings, he allowed it to be a necessary evil” (Winslow, p. 131). This dislike, along with Mr Darcys worry for his sister, calls for Elizabeth's sisterly help for Georgiana:

[invitations to balls] Mr Darcy scrutinized and discussed with his wife, ultimately accepting many more than he might have done according to his own inclination. He knew a month or two in London would afford his sister greater scope for social intercourse than any other circumstances imaginable (Winslow, p. 131).

Despite his worry, and despite Georgiana's past show of poor judgement, Georgiana has always been a great joy in Mr Darcy's life, and he will always do anything to protect her and make her happy, "Seeing tears welling up in her eyes, Darcy gathered his young sister into his embrace. Georgiana made no objection to resting in that comfortable and familiar refuge" (Winslow, p. 137).

The protectiveness of his sister and the trust in his wife becomes something of a challenge for Mr Darcy when he is made aware of the fact that Georgiana has confided in Elizabeth on a matter which he is not made privy too. This matter becomes a great subject of distress for him, "This will not do! I cannot simply dismiss the matter out of hand, without any sort of reasonable explanation. As her brother and her guardian, I have the duty to aid and protect her. If someone has harmed or insulted her..." (Winslow, p. 85). Mr Darcy is obviously torn between being very protective of Georgiana and not being used to not being Georgiana's confidante.

Darcy, who was equally eager to avoid causing his sister pain, labored under the distinct disadvantage of being kept in complete ignorance. Not knowing what would or would not be safe to utter in her presence severely limited his conversation. His comments to his sister were thereby mostly confined to the subtleties of the weather, which he felt certain could not cause Georgiana any undue distress (Winslow, p. 86).

Being significantly older than his sister, Mr Darcy has always had the love and admiration that only a young girl can have for her brother, and this is strengthened by the fact that Georgiana and Mr Darcy had very little family besides each other, "He, unfortunately, had little family. His parents were gone and there were no sibling except Georgiana. His only other relations were the Fitzwilliams and Lady Catherine de Bourgh and her daughter" (Winslow, p. 97).

Georgiana choosing to confide in Elizabeth instead of her brother gives Elizabeth an advantage when understanding the decisions Georgiana has made better than Mr Darcy, such as when Georgiana refuses a marriage proposal by the very eligible Henry Heywood:

The topic of the ill-fated marriage proposal did not dominate the conversation at the Darcy's dinner table later that day. Extraordinary as the event had been, it was over and done with. There was little more to be said about it, other than to wish Henry a speedy recovery from his disappointment, and to hope that the incident would not permanently damage the cordial friendship that had so long persisted between the two families (Winslow, p. 138).

While Elizabeth knows the true reason behind Georgiana's refusal, the fact that she still harboured hopes that she would be able to marry the man she truly desired, Mr Darcy was reduced to believing Georgiana just did not wish to marry Henry Heywood, and to find the reason behind this refusal of what would have been a very sensible and mutually beneficial match, to remain a mystery.

The strain between Mr Darcy and Lady Catherine de Bourgh becomes a subject for Mr Darcy and Elizabeth when Elizabeth becomes pregnant. Considering the lack of family on Mr Darcy's side, Elizabeth is in fact the one who encourages her husband to make amends with the little family he still has left, especially when a new member is going to be born,

All contact with her had been severed many months before as a result of her violent indignation over Mr Darcy's marriage plans. She had given vent to her acrimony in a letter with words so abusive that Darcy had vowed never to speak to his aunt again (Winslow, p. 97).

This action taken by Mr Darcy shows the stubbornness of his nature, and further underlines what he made clear in *Pride and Prejudice*, that once his good opinion was lost it was lost forever, even when concerning his own family. In fact, Mr Darcy becomes upset with Elizabeth for suggesting that he make amends with his family, not showing any indication that he had wanted reconciliation with his aunt himself (Winslow, p. 98). Through his lack of desire to reconcile with her, and his protestations of Elizabeth's suggestions that he should, the reader achieves an insight into Mr Darcy's hurt and bitterness over his aunt's disapproval of his marriage, and his intense loyalty to his wife, "As he promised his wife, Mr Darcy did seriously contemplate pursuing a reconciliation with his contentious aunt. For a long time, a battle raged within him, his righteous indignation at war with his conscience" (Winslow, p. 103).

While the reconciliation between Mr Darcy and his aunt was one asked for by Elizabeth, Lady Catherine still has not abandoned some of her feelings regarding her nephew's new wife. After an insulting speech regarding Elizabeth's musical abilities, performed in a manner that is very true to Lady Catherine, namely to hide insults behind compliments, Mr Darcy seems very close to retracting his offer of reconciling with his aunt and cousin, "After hearing this speech, Mr Darcy declared himself to be in grave need of fresh air" (Winslow, p. 163). This desire to leave the room indicates a fear of losing his temper, and a loss of patience with Lady Catherine's ways. Although the fact that Mr Darcy chose to simply excuse himself from her presence, shows how Mr Darcy is making an effort to keep

matters civil and cordial, on the behalf of his wife's wish that the family no longer be estranged from each other.

Mr Darcy and Children

The portrayal of Mr Darcy is very often seen through the eyes of his loving wife, which obviously can make the view biased. Yet there is one area where Mr Darcy does not live up to Elizabeth's hopes and expectations, when the subject of children and infants are concerned. While Elizabeth is worried about Mr Darcy's lack of involvement with infants, and his opinion that it is not his place to care for them, Mr Darcy is not uncaring about his impending fatherhood, nor the recent birth of his close friends' twins.

That night, Elizabeth shared the Bingleys' excellent news with her husband who, although not so outwardly moved, was nonetheless deeply pleased for them. The hearty congratulations and vigorous handshake he offered Mr. Bingley in the morning left no doubt of his good information. Little more passed openly between them on the subject, but a general state of cheer reigned round the breakfast table (Winslow, p. 20).

Situations such as these shows how well Elizabeth knows her husband, with her knowing what to look for when a situation she is uncertain about occurs, such as when she herself is experiencing pregnancy and wishes for her husband to participate in her joys when feeling her unborn child move:

Although Elizabeth could perceive additional stirrings, now that she knew what to watch for, they were insufficient strength for her husband to discern. Instead, he enjoyed the gratifying alternative of watching his wife's expressive face, experiencing the thrill vicariously through her (Winslow, p. 118).

Mr Darcy's satisfaction with only examining his wife experiencing their child move, reveals that he has still not formed a firm attachment to their future child, and that his main focus is still his wife. This is the first indication for the reader to Mr Darcy's lack of enthusiasm for the idea of young children.

Upon meeting his niece and nephew for the first time, Mr Darcy takes a surprising approach to babies and infants than what Elizabeth had hoped and expected,

'Very sensible of you, Bingley. I should have done the same,' said Darcy. 'These things are clearly in the purview of women. Men cannot be of much use with infants. Now, once a child is old enough for rational thought, the father can enter in – setting an example, teaching, admonishing, and so forth.'

[Elizabeth enquires further]

'Now, Lizzy, I did not mean exactly that. It is only that men in general – and I am no exception – seem to have very little idea of what to do with an infant. I expect to be most useful and most interested with what will come later, when the child is old enough to follow me about and learn from my knowledge and experience.' (Winslow, p. 119-120)

This is the first area where Elizabeth's perfect husband seems to have a flaw in her eyes, and she finds it surprising that Mr Darcy is planning on taking a rather relaxed approach to parenting:

‘Why should you be? I did not relate anything the least bit shocking or even out of the common way. As far as I can ascertain, the vast majority of men leave the tending of their small children entirely to the female sex. Even my own excellent father, from what I can remember, had little use for me until I was old enough to ride and shoot. He had even less time for my sister. Yet I would never be persuaded that we were neglected or unloved,’ Darcy said defensively (Winslow, p. 120).

While Mr Darcy is correct in claiming that the care of small children is less expected to fall on the father, both considering the place in history and the Darcy's place in society, this aspect does bring on some inconsistencies with the portrayal of Mr Darcy in *The Darcys of Pemberley*. While he is modern and surprising in some aspects, such as his display of affection for his wife, he is old-fashioned and traditional when it comes to his role in the upbringing of his children, something his wife is not. This opinion on child-care mirrors the Mr Darcy in *Me and Mr Darcy*, who also has strong opinions on the role of women in society, and that their place is in the home. This aspect can be intentional by the author to attempt to capture the personality a man of Mr Darcy's time would have, but can also be made by the author to create a reaction in the reader, and to show the contrasts in opinions between Mr Darcy and Emily and Elizabeth. The impression to begin with is that Mr Darcy is not even that fond of children on the whole, “Even Mr, Darcy, despite his initial protestations, relented and took a turn holding his niece and nephew” (Winslow, p. 123). Mr Darcy does in fact seem reluctant to every part of infants, including participating in finding the parents resemblance in the face of the new-borns:

‘I can give you no account of it,’ he said dismissively. ‘How one can remark a resemblance between a newly born infant and any adult is beyond my comprehension. Apparently, it requires a livelier imagination than I possess.’ (Winslow, p. 124)

This dismissal of resemblance between parents and infant draws connections to the dismissing attitude of Mr Darcy from *Pride and Prejudice*, such as his denial of Elizabeth's good looks during the first ball at Meryton.

While Mr Darcy and Elizabeth are seemingly in wedded bliss without a care in the world, there is one aspect of marriage life that they have yet to experience at the novel's beginning, which is the fact that Elizabeth is not yet with child, something which becomes a worry for Elizabeth, especially when her sister Jane becomes pregnant. Thus, the joy is that more the greater when Elizabeth is finally sure she is pregnant herself, and when she feels

confident enough in her condition that she feels she can inform her husband of the news, “‘The Lord be praised!’ said Darcy, picking her up and whirling her about in his excitement. ‘There can be no mistake? You are quite certain?’”(Winslow, p. 95) While the reader is allowed to see a side of Mr Darcy that was not shown in *Pride and Prejudice*, there is a specific kind of joy when he is made aware of his own impending fatherhood:

‘Joke if you will, but I must speak in earnest. My dearest Elizabeth, other than when you consented to be my wife, this is the best new you have ever given me. I am so grateful. Our prayers have been answered, and we will have a son or a daughter before the year is out!’ (Winslow, p. 95)

Mr Darcy is always one to compose himself, even in joyous occasions, and both Elizabeth and the reader enjoy seeing this side of the character:

After a quick glance to be sure they were alone, Darcy gave his wife a deep, lingering kiss, holding her body firmly against his own. In the midst of their enjoyment, a flutter of movement between them startled Mr Darcy, and he stopped still. ‘So, you felt it too,’ said Elizabeth in a whisper. ‘I most certainly did!’ he answered with hushed excitement (Winslow, p. 138).

While this is not a side seen often by neither the reader nor Elizabeth, this does mark the beginning of a significant change in Mr Darcy when considering infants and small children.

To Elizabeth’s relief, Mr Darcy’s demeanour starts to slip as their child grows and begins to become a reality rather than a fantasy:

He slipped his hand between them, and they both held their breath as the small bulge of Elizabeth’s belly shifted perceptibly again. She had become more and more aware of their child’s stirrings in the last few weeks, but Darcy had never before been able to share the experience. Now, they were caught up together in the wonder of it. They remained in that same attitude several minutes, until finally the spell was broken by the sound of the butler’s approaching footsteps. Darcy hastily released his wife, stepped back, and struggled to resume his usual air of dignity. Yet Elizabeth could see he was profoundly moved. She took it as a proof that he could never behave toward his infant son or daughter in the detached manner he had previously predicted (Winslow, p. 138).

While he tried to remain by his claim that a father had very little to do with infants, fatherhood did take Mr Darcy by surprise, and his previous exclamation regarding how he imagined himself as a father turned out to be incorrect:

As to the father, the fascination he felt for his progeny overtook him by surprise, and he was forced to recant his former opinions on the subject of a man’s limited role in rearing infants. Darcy held and coddled his son every bit as much as did Elizabeth, and on occasion had to be reprimanded by his wife for spoiling the child (Winslow, p. 317-318).

The softness Mr Darcy achieves through the birth of his son mirrors the softness he achieved when falling in love with Elizabeth, revealing how Mr Darcy’s arrogant exterior crumbles around the people closest to him.

This aspect of being very sure in his beliefs, and then to experience that he had been wrong mirrors Elizabeth's misconception of both Mr Darcy and Mr Wickham, and both Mr Darcy and Elizabeth came out from the experience humbler and thankful for what they ended up experiencing:

Darcy, sitting by her side, pressed her hand. 'It pleases me to hear you speak of Pemberley with so much feeling. I daresay you love the place nearly as much as I do now.'
'Oh, yes, but then Pemberley stole my heart the first time I saw it.'
'What a pity you cannot say the same for me,' said Darcy dryly (Winslow, p. 26-27).

While Elizabeth did end up changing her conception of him, Mr Darcy does not seem to let go off the fact that he was not Elizabeth's favourite after their first meeting:

'True,' she answered, with a playful grin. 'The fact that you were the owner of Pemberley, for instance, was a circumstance highly in your favour.'
'Yes, of course,' conceded Mr Darcy. 'As we have already established, you fell in love with Pemberley much more readily than you did with me. I think I was perhaps fortunate that you did not have to choose between the two.' (Winslow, p. 27-28)

While it can be argued that Elizabeth's feelings for Mr Darcy were allowed to fully bloom when visiting his estate is a representation of what Mr Darcy had to offer her, security for her and for her family, a home and a family, the reader might come to the impression that Mr Darcy's insecurities away from Pemberley consists of more than just Mr Darcy being away from his home. Pemberley represents Elizabeth as well, and if he did not have Pemberley, he might not have his wife. The uneasiness Mr Darcy feels away from home could also be a representation of his insecurities surrounding his marriage.

The relationship between husband and wife is made out to be closer than what would be expected of a marriage of that time, and Mr Darcy has a higher opinion of his wife than many men do:

Elizabeth frowned and said with a mock disdain, 'How little you understand the female sex, sir, to presume that we care only for trivialities. It might interest you to know that we ladies have more important matters to discuss than the latest style for sleeves. In private, we debate politics, the need for social reform, and the meaning of life amongst other things – things that men have very little capacity to comprehend.'

'Thank you for enlightening me, my dear. I had no idea. However, if, as you say, your thoughts and discourse run over such a wide and varying territory, you can have little reason to fear that you will ever be at a loss for something to talk about,' he said with a satisfied smile (Winslow, p. 214).

While Mr Darcy has a habit of keeping his business to himself, this passage could indicate that he is at least open to including his wife in his day to day matters. This passage also reveals the private humour the couple share, and the way they tease each other when talking.

Also, Elizabeth's comment about the need for social reform could be interpreted that she is a part of the very early movement concerning women's rights.

Mr Darcy and Pemberley

When it comes to Pemberley, it is very clear in both *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Darcys of Pemberley* that Pemberley is Mr Darcy's pride and joy, and that he goes to great measures in order to maintain it, and has a very hands-on approach to this business:

Although Darcy left much to the day-to-day oversight in the capable hands of his steward, he insisted on being kept abreast of all matters of consequence, and reserve for himself the task of every weighty decision (Winslow, p. 33).

Mr Darcy has been alone with the responsibility of his family heritage for quite some time when the reader is introduced to him, and it is hard for him to quit his habit of keeping his worries and problems to himself, and to let Elizabeth in on what is on his mind, "He was much more likely to brood in silence if trouble threatened" (Winslow, p. 33). Mr Darcy takes it upon his own judgment to decide what information Elizabeth is to be made privy to:

[Wickham attends the party uninvited, Darcy makes him leave and then informs his guests it was a local rascal] Although Darcy smiled and affected an air of good humor as he reassured the company, Elizabeth was not taken in. She followed his lead, however, encouraging the guests to resume their amusements as she made her way toward him to ascertain the truth of the matter (Winslow, p. 73).

While Elizabeth and Mr Darcy are very open with each other, there comes an incident when Mr Darcy makes a decision to not include his wife in his worry.

Although the relationship between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy is one based on mutual honesty and respect, when Elizabeth is forced to remain silent about Georgiana's worries, it is shown how Mr Darcy is not comfortable with having things kept from him, losing his temper with his wife:

Darcy's mouth hardened. He strode across the room and back again before answering with intense restraint. 'I am sorry, Elizabeth, but it just will not do. Your explanation, though plausible, seems a very convenient way to avoid owning the truth. I beg you would reconsider your stand. Have you taken into account what it is you are risking? The stakes are high, and I submit that the person you protect is not worthy of such loyalty and sacrifice!' Darcy turned on his heel, and abruptly quit the room (Winslow, p. 237).

Mr Darcy's fear of being manipulated and kept in the dark no doubt stems from his previous situation with Mr Wickham, and for the reader it becomes clear that Mr Darcy immediately jumps to the worst possible alternative. Mr Darcy thus reveals himself to still have a sense of insecurity, and fear of betrayal, which can at times come in conflict with his fierce need to protect his family.

When it comes to Mr Wickham, Mr Darcy has a large area of worry. Not only has he threatened Mr Darcy's family, his previous closeness with Elizabeth and his subsequent marriage to Lydia Bennet has made sure that Mr Darcy and Mr Wickham are forever entwined with each other, as brothers-in-law nonetheless. Considering Mr Wickham's previous deceptive skills, Mr Darcy's judgement when dealing with Mr Wickham is coloured, and Mr Darcy is thus inclined to believe Mr Wickham when he starts claiming he has had a more significant relationship with Elizabeth prior to her marriage than was first made clear:

He closed his eyes for a moment and dragged a hand across his furrowed brow before continuing. 'As you surely must know, I have good reason to believe that you have misrepresented the nature and extent of your former relationship with Mr. Wickham, and that you are, to this day, still attempting to conceal disgrace of it from me. Furthermore, as I said yesterday, he does not deserve your loyalty and protection. He certainly has not practiced discretion as diligently as you have on his behalf.' (Winslow, p. 244)

When Mr Wickham started accusing Elizabeth of hiding the truth from Mr Darcy, Mr Darcy did not think to confirm this with his wife before succumbing to Mr Wickham's demands. While Mr Darcy had good reason to take Mr Wickham's word for truth, he should nonetheless have discussed the matter with his wife, and believed her before the word of a man who is known for his ability to manipulate, "Darcy looked at her in confusion. 'I wish to believe you, yet the evidence is against you. I have seen the letter with my own eyes. It was in your hand, Elizabeth. How can you continue denying it?'" (Winslow, p. 246). This lack of trust in his wife says a lot concerning both Mr Darcy's relationship with Mr Wickham, and Mr Darcy's habit of taking care of problems by himself (Winslow, p. 245). That being said, the fact that Mr Darcy decided to not let Elizabeth's actions from before they were married to affect the marriage the two have today, or the love he has for his wife.

Through much convincing and pleading, Elizabeth is able to change Mr Darcy's mind about whom he should believe to be telling the truth:

"Blinking hard, Darcy weighed what she said and held out against her determination only a few moments longer. Then he fully embraced the sagacity of Elizabeth's reasoning. Given the character of the two opposing witnesses, accepting his wife's sworn testimony over Wickham's was the only choice that made sense. As he banished his last doubt, a shroud of sorrow fell away from his soul; the pain, so long his constant companion, vanished now that he knew his Elizabeth had never belonged to another" (Winslow, p. 246).

One can wonder why he would allow himself to dwell on this matter such a long time, without confiding in his wife, when there has been significant indication previously that Mr Darcy and Elizabeth have an unspoken agreement to be open and honest with each other, and to use each other as support during troubling times, "How Darcy would react to such an idea,

she might never know since she had been charged to keep the confession of love strictly confidential. Elizabeth was not in the habit of keeping secrets from her husband, nor did she wish to start” (Winslow, p. 83). Although, when Mr Darcy finally does confide in his wife, Elizabeth is very eager to forgive him (Winslow, p. 246). One can argue that Elizabeth is too eager to forgive him, giving the severity of the accusations that was made towards Elizabeth’s virtue and character, and there is no doubt Elizabeth would be in her full right to be insulted that her husband would believe she had compromised herself so greatly with Mr Wickham, and then to keep in close contact with the man. The betrayal suggested by Mr Wickham would mean everything Elizabeth has achieved has been based on lies, and Mr Darcy believed this to be true. Thus, Elizabeth could very well be hurt and insulted for quite some time, yet instead she forgives her husband immediately. This could mean she is foolish, and this could be an action taken by Elizabeth in order to leave the whole ordeal behind them, and allowing Elizabeth and Mr Darcy to move forwards as a couple, and to deal with the true guilty part, Mr Wickham. This ordeal does however remind Elizabeth and Mr Darcy that including Mr Wickham in their lives more than the bare minimum, considering Mr Wickham’s marriage to Elizabeth’s sister, does put Elizabeth and Mr Darcy in danger of being manipulated again, “Darcy and Elizabeth did not recover as quickly, being reminded once again of the considerable inconvenience of having Wickham for a brother-in-law” (Winslow, p. 73).

The fact that Elizabeth allowed for her husband to go about his days, obviously troubled by something that he would not share with her, is an example of how well Elizabeth has come to know Mr Darcy, and the way Mr Darcy prefers to deal with his challenges, “Experience had taught her that when Darcy brooded over some difficulty, repeated inquiries were neither welcome nor helpful. He must work through the problem in his own way. Her best course was to stand clear until the disturbance passed” (Winslow, p. 127). As the situation with Mr. Wickham’s blackmail has proved, this is not always the best approach to solving problems, yet it is a symbol of Mr Darcy’s earlier lack of confidante, and a symbol of his loneliness and isolation:

With this history in view, concern over the existing situation soon cast a pall on daily life at Pemberley. Darcy’s good humor steadily diminished in proportion to the time he spent grappling for a solution to the dilemma and finding none. He fell into dark moods, brooding and riding out at odd hours to clear his head (Winslow, p. 199).

The brooding and silent Mr Darcy is one the reader might recognise from *Pride and Prejudice*, but one that is not overall present in *The Darcys of Pemberley*. This indicates that when pressured and troubled, Mr Darcy does fall into old habits, and the softer Mr Darcy the

reader is privileged to experience, is one mainly reserved for Elizabeth and other selected member of his immediate circle, “Her husband was less successful in affecting an air of good humor, but since it was not uncommon for him to appear somewhat grim and taciturn, no one else seemed to notice anything amiss” (Winslow, p. 238-239).

The incident with Mr Wickham shows both Mr Darcy, Elizabeth and the reader how much of an inconvenience it is having Mr Wickham in their lives, and how he creates worry and sorrow for Mr Darcy and Elizabeth. Mr Wickham has been a source of concern for Mr Darcy for quite some time before the events in *Pride and Prejudice*, and his role in their lives is constantly hanging over their shoulders, “‘I agree that a *chance* meeting is improbable. It is far more likely he will go out of his way to impose himself on us in some fashion. It certainly would not be the first time,’ Darcy said, glowering. ‘I believe he would stoop to any manner of mischief if he thought it worth his while. Just to be prudent, you and Georgiana must not go out alone as long as he is in town’” (Winslow, p. 131). Mr Darcy’s protectiveness and Elizabeth’s independence clashes when it comes to Mr Wickham, and Mr Darcy is torn between his trust in his wife and his mistrust in Mr Wickham. While Mr Darcy does not wish to control Elizabeth’s freedom, and go the point of telling her what she can and cannot do, where she can and cannot go, or who she may or may not see, he is also very much worried about being in the same proximity as Mr Wickham, and what may happen if he or his family was to run into him unexpectedly.

Elizabeth is not the only one with romantic feelings towards Mr Darcy, seeing as Miss Caroline Bingley has seemingly not given up on her pursuit of him, regardless of his marriage to Elizabeth:

Her efforts were completely thrown away on Mr Darcy, however, who had long since become immune to her wiles. By dancing with Miss Bingley, he performed a duty in which he took no pleasure. The chore completed, he excused himself with a curt bow and swiftly returned to his wife (Winslow, p. 74).

Unfortunately for Caroline, she has become a private joke between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy, showing both the trust Elizabeth has in her husband, and the relationship Elizabeth and Mr Darcy has – one where husband and wife are very open with each other.

While Mr Darcy seems to be seemingly aware of Miss Bingley’s pursuit of him, and Elizabeth and Mr Darcy have a very strong and open relationship, Mr Darcy still allows himself to be manipulated by Caroline’s desire to stay at Pemberley as their houseguests, instead of staying at Jane and Mr. Bingley’s estate (Winslow, p. 180). Mr Darcy’s

gentlemanly manner gets in his own way, despite of his knowledge of his wife's disapproval of this matter:

Mr Darcy had the penetration to see her lament for what it truly was: an application for an invitation to Pemberley. Miss Bingley and the Hursts had been his guests there on many occasions before his marriage, as part of Mr. Bingley's party. The thought of having them now – for an unspecified length of stay and without the brother's moderating influence – did not fill Mr Darcy's heart with cheer. Nor did he expect his wife to rejoice at the prospect (Winslow, p. 181).

In several situations, Mr Darcy accepts the company of people he is not particularly fond of in order to spare their feelings and avoid being rude and to avoid insulting someone. This shows how Mr Darcy has a habit of dismissing his own discomfort for the comfort of others, showing his level of selflessness.

This selflessness also extends to his new in-laws, including Mr Wickham. When it comes to Mr and Mrs Bennet, Mr Darcy has expressed his opinion on them during the aftermath of his first disastrous proposal of marriage to Elizabeth, yet he accepts his wife's family and the inevitable visits he will have to endure with them:

As they drew near Longbourn, Darcy said, 'You realize that your parents are not likely to be satisfied with as brief a visit as we have planned. No doubt they will attempt to persuade us to stay the night, and I truly have no objection if you wish to remain. I am far more patient than I once was, so you need not be uneasy on my account' (Winslow, p. 187).

For the sake of his wife and her happiness, Mr Darcy has made a great effort when it comes to accepting the members of her family, and Elizabeth is thankful he did:

Hoping to ease his serious mood, Elizabeth said lightly, 'What a bad bargain you made when you married me, Mr Darcy, acquiring such odious relations. I am sure you have often been sorry for it,' she declared, fully expecting her husband to protest against such a statement, to deny there was any truth to it. To her surprise and mortification, he did not. [...] Being related to such a man as Wickham was no joke to him (Winslow, p. 197).

While the Bennet family are not entirely people from the level of society that Mr Darcy prefers to socialize with, he has taken an example from Mr Bingley, and has chosen to be with the woman he truly loves, regardless of her family relations. The fact that Mr Darcy willingly entered into marriage with a woman who already had Mr Wickham as a brother-in-law shows the personal sacrifices Mr Darcy has made.

Although Mr Darcy has accepted that Mr Wickham will always be in their lives as part of their extended family, there are still actions being made to make sure Mr Wickham spends as little time as possible in the presence of Mr Darcy and Elizabeth. By extension, this applies also to Lydia, although not in such an extent as her husband, "Not until dinner did Mr Darcy make an appearance, meeting his least favourite sister-in-law with tolerable composure and

civility” (Winslow, p. 201). While Lydia may visit her sister at Pemberley, be invited to balls thrown by Elizabeth and Mr Darcy, her husband is not welcome to attend, despite both the couple living on the estate. This can be interpreted as Mr Darcy protecting his family and his home, especially Georgiana. Mr Darcy will take any measures necessary in order to protect his sister from ever having to spend time in the presence of the man who once almost ruined her life. While any chance of a peaceful reconciliation or a relationship that would be expected between brothers-in-law is not an alternative, Mr Darcy does go to extreme lengths in order to give a sense of security to Lydia and Mr Wickham. There is no doubt that the reason behind his kindness shown to them is solely in order to remove an inconvenience from Jane and Mr Bingley’s life, as well as removing the option of Mr Darcy and Elizabeth having to take care of Lydia and Mr Wickham in the future. Mr Darcy gives Mr Wickham a cottage and some land on the Pemberley estate, putting himself and his family in close quarters with them for the foreseeable future, “Despite Darcy’s misgivings, he really hoped that, for the sake of all concerned, Wickham would take advantage of this one last chance to prosper” (Winslow, p. 206). By giving Mr Wickham one final chance to redeem himself, Mr Darcy breaks his previous notion of not giving second chances, although he also keeps Mr Wickham within range, which can be interpreted as a way of keeping an eye on him, and having a certain amount of control on Mr Wickham’s actions. Mr Darcy gave Mr Wickham a home and meaningful work, giving him every opportunity to create a life for himself and his family (Winslow, p. 203).

The affect Mr Wickham has over Mr Darcy, and Mr Darcy’s preference of keeping uncomfortable things to himself come to a clash when Mr Wickham attempts to manipulate Elizabeth, using the fact that Mr Darcy is keeping secrets against them:

‘The truth it, Mrs. Darcy, we have met several times on business, as lately as a month ago while you were in town.’ [...]

‘[...] You see, a gentleman never discusses such sordid affairs with a lady, a policy to which your husband apparently subscribes as well’ (Winslow, p. 222).

Mr Wickham reveals to know Mr Darcy’s habits and mannerisms extremely well, and while he uses this to create trouble for the couple, he is still being truthful, Mr Darcy and Mr Wickham have met on several occasions, and on each occasions, Mr Darcy lied to his wife, refusing to inform her of the true nature behind his meetings.

In *The Darcys of Pemberley*, Mr Wickham makes the change from selfish blackmailer to sociopath, namely one who has no problem with murder and sexual assault in order to

achieve his means. Mr Wickham plans to assault Elizabeth and then rid himself of her in order to execute revenge on Mr Darcy:

At the sight of his wife, disheveled and needing assistance, Mr Darcy dismounted and ran to her. [...] Darcy took command of the situation. 'I will investigate this myself, Mr. Adams. Be good enough to escort the ladies to the house, and then join me.[...]' After one more glance back at his wife, Darcy urged his mount down the path from which she had just fled (Winslow, p. 234).

While the distress of seeing his wife hurt greatly rattles him, Mr Darcy proves that he is good in a crisis and does not let his emotions get the best of him. The change in Mr Wickham, and the pushing of Mr Wickham's limits considering what he is willing to do to achieve his means, show how the author takes liberties in shaping the characters from *Pride and Prejudice* to *The Darcys of Pemberley* (Winslow, p. 274-279). One can argue that the change from deceitful and manipulative to murderous is a very large leap, and might not read altogether realistic. The need for a villain for the plot becomes greater than the need to keep the characters believable, Mr Wickham being the most extreme example.

Although good in a crisis, the desperation Mr Darcy experiences when the threat of losing his wife becomes dauntingly realistic reveals a desperation that is not previously seen by the reader. A man of composure and serenity, Mr Darcy's temper changes and his patience with the people around him decreases greatly (Winslow, p. 279-282). Mr Darcy gathers up an armed search party and rides around the estate frantically, shuddering at the thought of what his wife could be experiencing that very moment. His actions reflect a dishevelled and scared man, and he is not concerned with anyone seeing him in his frantic state.

The novel ends with Mr Darcy embracing his new role as a father, and Elizabeth and Mr Darcy continuing their life spent in married bliss:

The fact that he had a healthy son and his wife was doing well rendered Mr Darcy completely speechless for some minutes. His eyes alone expressed to his sister-in-law all he felt. After she returned to Elizabeth's side, Darcy offered his silent eloquence up to his God in praise and thanksgiving (Winslow, p. 315).

The birth of his son marks a great change in Mr Darcy's demeanour, and the fact that he is rendered speechless by his son's birth shows the effect the dramatic situation preceding it had on him. Mr Darcy was very close to losing everything that truly mattered to him, and he came out of the situation with everything he never knew he always wanted.

While the author's aim to create a sequel to a beloved classic is one attempted by many others, there are some cracks in the surface of the story along with lacks of consistency,

for example with the use of the wrong version of English, "...to postpone her visit until the fall" (Winslow, p. 249). This being said by Mr Darcy himself, it would be very unlikely that he would use the American term 'fall', instead of the English term 'autumn'. When it comes to the characters, and to Mr Darcy in particular, the author has attempted to fuse a modern fantasy with a classic gentleman, in an attempt develop the character further as a husband and a father:

Fundamental disagreements over interpretation are not uncommon in literary studies, but when Austen is the subject, the arguments sometimes seem especially impassioned. Austen matters in a way that many other writers, even some famous ones, don't. 'There's just more at stake. People get more invested,' Devoney Looser says. 'It's like she's a Rorschach test. They want to see themselves in her' (Yaffe, p. 107).

Fans of *Pride and Prejudice* have a desire for the marriage between Mr Darcy and Elizabeth to succeed (Yaffe, p. 85), and Winslow uses this fan base as a basis for her interpretation of the characters and their marriage. There are a large variety of spin-off novels relating to the sexual and romantic nature of their relationship, with varying degree of positive reception. Author Linda Berdoll experienced fans being angry with her for having Mr Darcy have an affair with a duchess, claiming that is something Mr Darcy would never have done:

Arnie [Perstein] believes that each Austen novel can be read as telling two different stories: the familiar one, with its beloved heroine, witty social satire, and happy ending, and an unfamiliar, far darker version, in which even sympathetic characters lie and scheme, indulge in illicit sex, conceal out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and even commit murder, en route to an ending that may not be so happy after all (Yaffe, p. 117-118).

While spin-off novels based on the dark aspects suggested by Perstein, the reaction these novels receive by fans show the deep devotion to the characters of *Pride and Prejudice*, and a fierce protectiveness of their morals, standing and virtue.

One can argue that these development made by the author are not a wrong interpretation of the character, as the reader does not know what Austen herself intended for the characters after they were married. Austen herself did in fact encourage her readers to imagine what would happen next:

Trained to regard the text itself as a sacred boundary which must never be violated, we are confounded by the common Janeite game of imagining how a character in one novel might behave towards a character in another, or of speculating how the novels might continue *after* the wedding (a practice Austen herself authorized by gratifying the curiosity of her nephews and nieces).²⁵

²⁵ Claudia L. Johnson, "Austen cults and cultures," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. Edward Copeland et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 223

One could thus argue that the act of creating a sequel for *Pride and Prejudice* was one created and intended by Austen herself, by ending the novel with the wedding, and leaving the married life of Mr Darcy and Elizabeth open to interpretation. This action taken by the author can be related to Roland Barthes theory of death of the author. Winslow has abolished Austen and her reputation and expectations, and Winslow as a reader is thus able to take her own standing on events and creating them again in her own image.

One aspect of spin-off novels relating to *Pride and Prejudice* that is on many occasions used is a variety on the famous first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*, “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife” (Austen, p. 3). The irony and satire seeping from this single sentence has become just as iconic as Austen herself, and by using this sentence as a template, the authors of spin-off and fan-fiction create a direct relation in the reader’s mind to the beginning of the original novel. In *The Darcys of Pemberley*, the sentence reads, “It is a truth universally acknowledged that even the most ignoble person on the face of the earth appears more praiseworthy after death” (Winslow, p. 3). Although not as satiric as Austen, the sentences both create a standpoint for future events, although the sentence in *The Darcys of Pemberley* only relate to two events in the novel, not on the novel as a whole. The ones who achieve praise after death, although undeserving, are Mr Collins and Mr Wickham, and while the death of Mr Wickham does have impact on the plot of the novel, it does not stand to the end as a great part of it, thus making the first sentence not as relatable as the one in *Pride and Prejudice*.

While the act of creating spin-offs and sequels for *Pride and Prejudice* has not been accepted on an academic level, it has been a popular activity among the fandom and the Janeites. It can be argued that it is *Pride and Prejudice*’s character have gained a life of their own beyond the pages of the novel, both for plot, theme and character, is what makes it both immortal and classic:

I propose here to question the accepted view that a classic work does not depend for its status upon the circumstances in which it is read and will argue exactly the reverse: that a literary classic is a product of all those circumstances of which it has traditionally been supposed to be independent. My purpose is not to depreciate classic works but to reveal their mutability.²⁶

²⁶ Jane Tompkins, “Masterpiece Theater: The Politics of Hawthorne’s Literary Reputation,” in *Reception Study. From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies*, ed. James L. Machor et al. (New York: Routledge, 2001), 133

Pride and Prejudice has inspired spin-offs since its publication, thus, show how the popularity and inspiration behind the spin-off's precedes the novel's academic acceptance as a classic in the 1950's, "There is never a case in which circumstances do not affect the way people read and hence *what* they read – the text itself" (Tompkins, p. 137). While *Pride and Prejudice* has experienced waves of popularity since its publication, there have always been fans imagining what happens after Mr Darcy and Elizabeth's wedding.

Jane Tompkins writes "A literary text only becomes visible from within a particular framework of beliefs" (Tompkins, p. 140). When it comes to *The Darcys of Pemberley*, the aspect of prerequisites from the reader is attempted to be established by the author in the preface to the novel. By giving a quick introduction to the characters in the preface, the author appears to lay down the groundwork for the reader, giving the impression that having read *Pride and Prejudice* is not a prerequisite for enjoying or understanding *The Darcys of Pemberley*, yet for the ones who are well acquainted with *Pride and Prejudice* will see the liberties taken by the author, and the 'framework of beliefs' the author has attempted to establish does apply to such an extent. The author instead tries to create a framework in the preface, giving the reader the information the author views as important and necessary.

Although her discussion is concerning Nathaniel Hawthorne, there is much transferable value to Jane Austen. Tompkins writes:

The idea that great literary works are those that stand the test of time might seem at first to have a persuasive force that no amount of argument can dispel. Yet the moment one starts to investigate the critical history of even a single work, the notion that a classic is a book that outlasts its age becomes extremely problematic (Tompkins, p. 149).

When it comes to *Pride and Prejudice*, the novel has seen periods of rediscovery and re-evaluation, causing Austen to become a popular author at different times for different reasons:

The fact is that literary classics do not *withstand* change; rather, they are always registering, or promoting, or retarding alterations in historical conditions as these affect their reader and, especially, the members of the literary establishment. [...] They are the mirrors of culture as culture is interpreted by those who control the literary establishment (Tompkins, p. 151).

One can thus wonder what the character of Mr Darcy, who undoubtedly has gone down in literary history as a classic hero, mirrors in culture. The fandom relating to him are one of the most popular branches of recent Austen-related reception history, and the fans' obsession with Mr Darcy do, however, reveal an aspect of Austen's popularity, "The fans words or behaviour are not, of course, empirical facts that speak for themselves; rather, they are texts

that need 'reading' theoretically in just the same way as the 'texts of Madonna' do."²⁷ When it comes to the *The Darcys of Pemberley*, the author has previously been a reader of *Pride and Prejudice*, and taken a character from that novel and re-created him. A softer and more physically romantic Mr Darcy has been created, "This emphasis on the making of the image allows, or even invites, and equivalent control by the reader over its reception" (Fiske, p.254). Winslow has created a more modern and less stern Mr Darcy, separating him from the one in *Pride and Prejudice*. While Potter's aim was to discredit the fantasy surrounding Mr Darcy, Winslow has attempted to create a new fantasy of a vigorous and kind husband.

²⁷ John Fiske, "Madonna," in *Reception Study. From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies*, ed. James L. Machor et al. (New York: Routledge, 2001), 246

Chapter 3: The Private Diary of Mr Darcy

*The Private Diary of Mr Darcy*²⁸ by Maya Slater follows the events in *Pride and Prejudice*, but told from Mr Darcy's point of view, in the form of his personal diary. The novel relates events from Hertfordshire and London, and also makes an effort to place *Pride and Prejudice* in time, working the events in *Pride and Prejudice* around events in British history, giving them accurate dates. The novel also makes an effort to give the impression that the events in *Pride and Prejudice* were actual events, adding a fictional editor's note (Slater, p. 315) explaining how the diary was found in a bureau dating from the regency:²⁹

But then, in the fifth volume, the Expert made an astounding discovery: the final pages of the Diary echo in every respect the story of Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy, as told by Jane Austen in her novel *Pride and Prejudice*. [...] The inescapable conclusion was that Jane Austen had based her novel on real events. It was decided to prepare the relevant pages of the Diary for publication (Slater, p. 315).

While this editor's note is in fact not an editor's note, but a part of the novel itself, it might seem unnecessary, yet it as common framing device for novels, seen in novels such as *Gulliver's Travels*. While attempting to add an amount of mystery and depth to the story, the author is suggesting that the events in *Pride and Prejudice* were actually real events executed by real people.

Plot introduction

The Private Diary of Mr Darcy begins the day of the ball at Meryton, giving an immediate explanation of Mr Darcy's apparent pride. He is distracted by worry for Georgiana, who has seemed depressed in the last correspondences between them. The novel gives explanations to all his actions taken in Hertfordshire, such as his disbelieve of Jane's affection, this being credited to Mr Darcy overhearing a conversation between two officers, who are talking about Lydia's flirtatious behaviour.

The reader is also made privy to more details of why Mr Darcy has such intense hatred for Mr Wickham, informing the reader of how Mr Darcy found them in bed together, Georgiana crying and admitting to her brother how he forced her, the fear Georgiana and Mr Darcy endured while suspecting she might have been pregnant, and how Mr Wickham continued to blackmail Mr Darcy, threatening to ruin Georgiana's reputation.

²⁸ Maya Slater, *The Private Diary of Mr Darcy* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2009)

²⁹ This aspect of finding the novel in bureau is borrowed from Jane Austen's novel *Northanger Abbey*.

The months Mr Darcy spent in London are the ones of especial interest for the reader, and we learn how Mr Darcy proposed marriage to his cousin, Anne de Bourgh, and how he spent his days with Lord Byron and Mr Bingley, attempting to shield his friend from the heartbreak he would endure from Jane Bennet.

The author has attempted to create the allusion of a proper diary, with all entries dated, following historical events, and with some entries simply explaining the events of that day, without being relevant to the plot, “November 29th. Spent today catching up with my affairs in Town, & a visit to my Uncle Fitzwilliam” (Slater, p. 63). One reason behind the author’s choice of format can be that this is a way of humanising the character, adding to the illusion that this is truly Mr Darcy’s actions, and the author, and the reader by extension, has been made privy to his private thoughts and recollections.

Through historical events, the reader is able to place the start of the novel in October 1810, and ending in September 1811, by referring to events during the Peninsula War: “I am spending the evening alone in the Library, reading in the newspaper about the Duke’s difficulties at Almeida. The ill-deserved successes of the French due to a violent explosion in our Arsenal” (Slater, p. 16). The Mr Darcy portrayed in this novel is politically active, keeps up with current events and gives his opinion on the actions taken by the royal family:

His Royal Highness is, however, dissatisfied with its terms, which are such as to curb his spending. The general view was that the Regent is shockingly extravagant. He keeps a mistress & ten or eleven children, & builds houses & palaces all over the country. His annual tailor’s bill alone would be enough to maintain a small town in comfort (Slater, p. 106).

Mr Darcy’s reflection on the troubles of the Royal Family further confirms the year to be 1810:

They are all talking about His Majesty’s violent grief at Her Royal Highness the Princess Amelia’s illness. They say she is very poorly indeed. His Majesty is beside Himself, & Colebrooke whispered that he has it on good report that the King acts most strangely, & looks like to lose His reason once more (Slater, p. 23).

Through the medium of a diary, Mr Darcy is able to comment freely on current events, without considering tact and manner. The author also uses the medium to inform the reader as to why Mr Darcy would want to keep a diary:

Keeping my Diary was the last thing she ever asked me to do. She told me gently that I should come to cherish it as a friend. After her death, I tried to be true to her wishes, & ever since have obeyed her injunction to write as frankly & fully as I could (Slater, p. 25).

This notion is one of several allusions to Mr Darcy's mother, and the affection he had for her. Lady Darcy is undoubtedly a lingering figure in her son's life, and Mr Darcy sees her as a figure to turn to for moral guidance.

Mr Darcy and Georgiana

In all adaptations and versions of Mr Darcy, the affection he has for his sister Georgiana and his intense desire to protect her is constant. Mr Darcy's concern for her manifests early in the diary, with Mr Darcy often reflecting on her recovery from the ordeal with Mr Wickham (Slater, p. 19). By having Mr Darcy keep a diary, the author is able to give a recollection of how the situation with Mr Wickham did transpire, and give the reader details that are not revealed in *Pride and Prejudice*. Through the description of the state in which Mr Darcy found his sister, the reader gains a larger view of the reasoning behind Mr Darcy's intense hatred of Mr Wickham, and the need Mr Darcy has to both protect his sister and her reputation. Mr Darcy shows himself to be a man who will stop at nothing to ensure his sister's safety, both physical and psychological. When it comes to Georgiana, Mr Darcy is protective, loving and gentle, showing the reader a side of him which is usually not apparent, "I went back to the bed & bent over Georgiana. I stroked her hair & wiped the tears from her cheeks. She trembled, but did not push my hand away" (Slater, p. 158).

Mr Darcy's concern for Georgiana's upbringing is one of the reasons why it becomes important to him to find a suitable wife, someone who is not only a good wife to him, but also a devoted sister to Georgiana, "G's uncertain temper these last few days has forced my hand. She appears to be on the verge of misbehaviour, & badly needs a Sister to guide her" (Slater, p. 187). Mr Darcy takes every sorrow in Georgiana's life personally, showing how he believes himself not only responsible for her upbringing and safety, but for everything which might happen to her, done by her own choice or not. Mr Darcy has unrealistic expectations of what is expected of him when it comes to his sister, blaming himself for her choices, considering himself completely responsible for her happiness and having a large amount of scepticism regarding the intentions of everyone who enters her life.

As her guardian, the issue of Georgiana's marriage prospects is one that is often on Mr Darcy's mind, especially since the almost disastrous elopement with Mr Wickham. While Mr Darcy does not wish to force his sister to do anything against her will, least of all marry

someone whom she does not love³⁰, he does however see prospects in his own private circle of friends.

Who knows, the presence of Georgie under the same rood may eventually distract him from his thoughts of Jane! That would be my dearest wish - & I suspect that his Sisters may share my hopes. But that must be in the distant future. G is still so young, poor child (Slater, p. 81)!

This notion of the Darcy and the Bingley family uniting in marriage is one thought about by several members. In the perfect world of Caroline Bingley, she would marry Mr Darcy, while Charles Bingley would marry Georgiana. For Mr Darcy, this option might be the safest, as he would be ensured that Georgiana is with someone whom Mr Darcy can trust, and who he cares for.

Mr Darcy's overprotectiveness towards Georgiana and cynicism towards anyone who attempts to get close to her is tested when Georgiana apparently shows affection for a new officer. Darcy's worry and concern affects him deeply, along with his disappointment with everyone around Georgiana, who were supposed to protect her (Slater, p. 224). Although, through his reaction to Georgiana's flirtations reveals the extent of his affections for his sister. Mr Darcy do not seem to blame his sister for her actions, or blaming her responsible. This shows how Georgiana is perfect, vulnerable and innocent in his eyes, and that everyone else is trying to take advantage of her. This can be interpreted as Mr Darcy not having a lot of faith in his sister's ability to make good decisions, and that if she is not protected and watched at all times, she will get herself hurt, and that he does not completely trust her. In this interpretation of him, Mr Darcy shows tendencies to be possessive and controlling.

Mr Darcy and sex

As a single man in a certain time, there are aspects of life that is accepted to be executed by men and not by single women. Although not graphically addressed, there are aspects of the novel which prove Mr Darcy is a man of virility, although for the most part, the blame is placed on the influence of Mr Darcy's friend Lord Byron. Lord Byron is a character who has not been mentioned as a part of Mr Darcy's life in other spin-off novels, and serves as an immoral point in Mr Darcy's life being a foil to his character:

I took much Port Wine, & raised no objection when Byron came to find us & carried us off to meet some '*charming women*' of his acquaintance. I remember little of the evening after that.

³⁰ As a woman with considerable wealth in her own name, Georgiana has the luxury of marrying for love, not money. Although, this does also make her vulnerable to men whom are only interested in her wealth, such as Mr. Wickham.

My bit of muslin was fair & curvaceous, with a loud laugh. She had fine paps to her. Her name, I believe, is Clarabelle. I am not sure who brought me home (Slater, p. 21).

By having Mr Darcy fall for temptation and succumb to drink and women, the reader sees a man who is flawed and who is, after all, only human. Being under the pressure that he is, it is understandable for Mr Darcy to need an outlet for his frustration and worry, yet it does fall his character into question when he seduces the housemaid at Netherfield, Nellie.

When I went up to my chamber to dress for dinner, I found a housemaid kneeling by the hearth, replacing some fallen coals with the tongs. A pretty wench, with dark blue eyes, & pleasing *enbonpoint*. She jumped to her feet in some confusion. I chucked her under the chin, & asked her name – it is Nellie. I told her to fetch me a dish of tea later that night, before retiring, which she did once Peebles had left me. She was lively, but not innocent. The Meryton blacksmith's son has taught her everything she knows, she tells me. O, what joy to feel lightness of heart again (Slater, p. 30)!

Knowing the risk of such relationships, and considering how he would later think ill of Lord Byron for getting one of his housemaids pregnant, and thus sending her away, as well as his constant disapproval of Mr Hurst's relations with one of Netherfield's kitchen maids, it might seem hypocritical for Mr Darcy to take part in such arrangements himself.

Although Mr Darcys relationship with Nellie lifts Mr Darcys mood, he does not wish to tarnish his reputation with the Bennet sisters, and has the sense to keep his distance from Nellie when Jane and Elizabeth Bennet are staying at Netherfield, "I have instructed Nellie to keep away while the Misses Bennet are house guests" (Slater, p. 37). Mr Darcy keeps his relationship with Nellie quiet and hushed while he is in Hertfordshire, yet he does not have the same worry about reputation and being discrete when he is in London.

I shared his scruples but not his self-discipline, & proceeded to take too much liquor. Later found myself under the dining-table. I have but little recollection of what happened next. I believe that a plump young maiden with brown curling hair attempted to fix my attentions – but I also dimly remember a pair of flaxen-haired wenches endeavouring to mount me together (Slater, p. 215)...

This reveals that Mr Darcy is aware of his place in society, and how he should appear considering his standing as a gentleman. While Mr Darcy often seems to get into these situations in the company of Lord Byron, it does however show how impressionable Mr Darcy can be, especially when his mind is muddled with the thoughts of Elizabeth Bennet.

Last evening, in a gesture of defiance against all gentlewoman, I visited the *bordello*. [...] My evening proved enjoyable enough 'til I took her to bed. With my eyes shut, my arms clasped round that little body, it came to my mind that E is just so – slender & small. It might almost have been she whom I held in my arms. I was forced to turn my head aside, that Dulcinea might not observe my tears (Slater, p. 171-172).

Mr Darcy's conflicting feelings about Elizabeth Bennet, and his depression and heartache following her rejection of his marriage proposal affect Mr Darcy on a deeper level than what the reader has seen in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Me and Mr Darcy* or *The Darcys of Pemberley*. Mr Darcy is distraught and devastated, which leads him to make questionable decisions, "I am fatigued with clubs. These nights of dissipation do not suit my humour in the least. Still, needs must. Besides, they take my mind off my own preoccupations" (Slater, p. 72). Mr Darcy seems willing to do anything to occupy his mind from his own despair.

Mr Darcy's reckless behaviour does not go unnoticed by his inner circle, leading Mr Bingley to confront Mr Darcy about his behaviour.

It began with his remarking on my willingness to consort with unknown women, and, worse still, to participate in such a public debauchery, despite my correctness of manner. He continues: 'It is all very well for you, Fitz, fancy-free as you are. You can feel perfectly at liberty to indulge yourself.' [...] Why must my friends assert that it is '*all very well*' for me, when they know nothing? I wish I could unburden myself to him, but how would it be if he knew of my feelings for the Sister of his own lost love (Slater, p. 221)?

Mr Darcy's actions have caught up with him, and he is troubled by his own hypocrisy in pursuing Elizabeth while discouraging his friend from pursuing her sister. The struggle of betraying his friend obviously troubles him more than the reader has known before, and gives us an insight to how much Mr Darcy's actions truly trouble him, showing the reader that he truly regrets his actions and is struggling with the morality of staying true to his position in society and his friends, and love, both for himself and Mr Bingley.

Mr Darcy and Elizabeth

In an attempt by the author to further give the reader the impression that he or she is reading the other side of the events in *Pride and Prejudice*, the meetings and conversations related to Elizabeth Bennet are virtually identical in *The Private Diary of Mr Darcy* and *Pride and Prejudice*. However, in *The Private Diary of Mr Darcy*, the reader is being made privy to the reasoning behind Mr Darcy's actions, to further understand his reasoning. One of the first impressions the reader gets of Mr Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* is at the Merton Ball, where Jane and Mr Bingley's first signs of attraction blossomed, and Mr Darcy managed to insult Elizabeth by not thinking her handsome enough for him. In *The Private Diary of Mr Darcy*, Mr Darcy explains to the reader that he did not wish to attend the ball in the first place, but Mr Bingley would not hear of him missing it (Slater, p. 11). Mr Darcy's reluctance to attend will undoubtedly have affected his overall mood and experience at the ball itself, which further creates a negative attitude when it comes to experiencing country life and dancing

with the ladies present. Thus, Mr Darcy left a bad impression with everyone around him, who mistakes his discomfort and bad mood as being proud and disagreeable. The reluctant attitude Mr Darcy had before attending further explains his dismissal of Elizabeth Bennet, “He would have foisted one of her Sisters on me. I resisted. She seemed tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt *me*” (Slater, p. 12). Mr Darcy’s absent mind and unfavourable mood influenced his entire experience of the ball at Meryton, including his first meeting with Elizabeth. This absence also left him vulnerable to the influence of Caroline Bingley and Louisa Hurst, who quickly inform him of the low standings of the inhabitants of Meryton.

Mr Darcy’s fascination with Elizabeth begins during their second meeting.

I amused myself watching Miss Elizabeth Bennet. She has a bold manner, & always seems to be laughing at something or some body. Her brownish hair escapes in untidy curls round her face; her unexpectedly dark eyes sparkle with mischief – scarcely befitting a respectable young lady. Her complexion is quite brown – I daresay she is too much in the wind & sun, if, as Miss Caroline suggests, she spends her days roaming the countryside unchaperoned. Whatever the reason, she is positively weatherbeaten (Slater, p. 24-25).

Mr Darcy gives the reader obvious signs of a blossoming infatuation with Elizabeth, although he initially finds her more intriguing than attractive to begin with.

As always, Charles insisted on paying his attentions exclusively to Miss Bennet, whose given name, I understand, is Jane. After all, I have changed my opinion. Miss Elizabeth Bennet is rather more handsome than her Sister. Miss Bennet has the advantage of her as to classical good looks, but Miss Elizabeth has more vivacity, & finer eyes. I listened to her conversation at dinner – she was mocking the other ladies, who expressed their fondness for a soldier in uniform. She is witty & sharp – if I were only in a mood to hear her (Slater, p. 27)!

Mr Darcy admits himself that his mood and other preoccupations are keeping him from truly experiencing and appreciating what Elizabeth has to say, which could also explain for his apparent lack of interest in her, which is being misinterpreted as proud. Yet he is fascinated by her, and finds himself fumbling his words and feeling self-conscious around Elizabeth, “We had never spoken before. I scarcely know how I replied – some remark about young ladies loving to dance, I believe. I was quite looking forward to continuing the conversation, when Miss Lucas invited her to sing” (Slater, p. 31). The popular re-interpretation of Mr Darcy’s pride in this novel changed from humility to distraction and fascination, which differs from *Me and Mr Darcy* and *The Darcys of Pemberley*, yet it still has the same effect of putting Mr Darcy in a more flattering light. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr Darcy is the one that it is agreed upon who is proud and rude, while in *The Private Diary of Mr Darcy*, Mr Darcy explains how he experiences Elizabeth as rude and proud, in refusing to dance with him.

While Mr Darcy find himself attracted to both Elizabeth's looks and her intellect, he struggles with her lack of connections. As a man of a certain standing, there are expectations as to the wife he will take, and he realises that the Bennet sister have limited options.

A provoking evening. In the earlier part of it I avoided Miss Elizabeth Bennet, tho' I confess I was ready to hear her perform on the pianoforte after dinner. But when Charles, Edward Hurst & I rejoined the ladies in the drawing-room, I found that Miss Elizabeth had returned to the sick room, & that we are not to have the pleasure of her company again that evening. I sat down to a rubber of whist with Mrs Louisa, her Husband & Miss Caroline. The two ladies abused Miss Elizabeth without ceasing for a full to her petticoat (muddy). Miss Caroline actually invited me to join in this sport, but I refused – indeed, I think that on the whole Miss Elizabeth looks well, so it would scarcely have been honest in me to do to. I did agree, however, when the two Bingley ladies waxed eloquent about Miss Bennet's low connexions: I concur with the view that the Bennet Sisters, situated as they are, will find it difficult to catch respectable Husbands (Slater, p. 36).

This is the first indication of Mr Darcy even taking Elizabeth into consideration for his wife, but it also shows that he has taken a stand as to her character, and refuses to indulge Caroline and Louisa in talking ill of Elizabeth behind her back, Mr Darcy indicates on several occasions how he cannot remember the conversations he has with Elizabeth, which can be interpreted as a sign that she makes him nervous, and is unable to focus when she is around him. This can also indicate to his insecurities, which is an aspect of his character which has been greatly discussed in other spin-off novels. One might think Mr Darcy becomes insecure around Elizabeth as he knows she is willing to stand up to him, mock him and refuse him if she wishes. Considering Mr Darcy's position in society, this might be something Mr Darcy is not used to, especially from women, and he does not know how to react to it.

During Elizabeth's stay at Netherfield to care for her ill sister, the beginning of what can be seen as Mr Darcy's obsessive behaviour towards Elizabeth.

I was waiting in the drawing-room for Miss Elizabeth to come down: I deemed it only civil in me to escort her round the Park – she had scarcely left the house since she arrived two days ago. But instead Miss Caroline sought me out, wishing to walk with me. As she reminded me, I had on an earlier occasion suggested that she needed to take more exercise (Slater, p. 39).

Mr Darcy begins to plan his day around Elizabeth, and trying to figure out how to spend as much time in her presence, which might seem endearing to begin with, can escalate to damaging quickly.

Mr Darcy's growing obsession also extends to his desire to dance with Elizabeth, and one can interpret how he feels he was robbed of the experience in the past.

I was displaced with Miss Caroline later, when, in Miss Elizabeth's hearing, she maintained, yet again, that dancing for me is '*rather a punishment than a pleasure*'. This does not further

my aim of persuading Miss Elizabeth to dance with me, if only once so far she has eluded me (Slater, p. 40).

Mr Darcy has been actively plotting to persuade Elizabeth to spend time with him, taking steps from the fascinated to the obsessive.

By taking up much of Mr Darcy's mind, Elizabeth has unintentionally achieved a position of power over Mr Darcy, one that she is not aware of, but Mr Darcy painfully is. The fact that this struggle for power in the relationship between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy is one that Mr Darcy has created on his own, can both be an indicator of Mr Darcy's obsession, considering how Mr Darcy is creating aspects of a relationship that is non-existent for the other party. This can also be a clear indicator of Mr Darcy's obsessive behaviour, "I pretended to read, even remembering to turn the pages; but instead I was observing her profile, reflected in the glass of a bookcase. It gave me a feeling of power, knowing she could not be aware how I watched her" (Slater, p. 43). By executing this simple action, to watch her without her knowing, Mr Darcy believes he has shifted the power in the relationship from Elizabeth and back to himself.

Considering how important it became for Mr Darcy to be able to dance with Elizabeth, when it finally happens, he considers it a personal victory, "Let me start with this: I have danced with her. It is probably – nay, certainly – the first & only time that our hands will ever touch. She has repeatedly refused to dance with me, & yet she takes the floor, so gracefully, with anyone else who asks her" (Slater, p. 54). It can be interpreted that Mr Darcy's obsession over Elizabeth is causing him to lose control, and he feels that by convincing Elizabeth to dance with him, he is taking the first step towards regaining the control he has lost. This indicates to his obsessive behaviour and a fictitious reality Mr Darcy is beginning to create surrounding Elizabeth and himself. Elizabeth's behaviour confuses Mr Darcy, and trying to decipher her behaviour is beginning to take up a lot of Mr Darcy's time and energy. He has trouble understanding what he has done to insult her, not realising that a simple expression of his own foul mood as turned Elizabeth so greatly against him, "And then she embarked on a cruel analysis of my character defects. Her tongue is sharp, her intelligence keen. She seems to consider me vengeful, implacable, harsh & prejudiced. What have I done to deserve this?" (Slater, p. 55). Despite his best efforts, Elizabeth affects Mr Darcy greatly, and he holds her opinion highly, and is hurt by her harsh words, so much that he needs to excuse himself to reflect on them, "After I had escorted her to a chair, I went out onto the darkened terrace, & sat in the leafless rose arbour. I needed a quiet place to reflect on what she had said to me. I

leant my head against the bench & closed my eyes” (Slater, p. 55). Elizabeth becomes an example of good behaviour in Mr Darcy’s life, and he often tries to imagine how Elizabeth would react to aspects of his life, or what she would think of the things people say, “I could not help wondering what Miss Elizabeth would have thought had she observed a scene such as this” (Slater, p. 63). This shows what kind of influence Elizabeth has become to Mr Darcy in such a short time, and how much of her lingers with him after they have left each other’s company.

His homilies about sacrificing all to help the poor sounded absurdly from his fleshy, well-nourished person - & I remembered the three helpings of roast beef he consumed last evening. How Miss Elizabeth would have smiled to hear him! I had banished her from my mind these last weeks. The remembrance of her smote me – I was not expecting it, had no inkling of how it would affect me. I was forced to hold my hand over my heart to still its pounding (Slater, p. 75).

Considering his discomfort with his feelings concerning Elizabeth, one can assume that he has not been moved in such a way by a woman before, and he is not comfortable with this lack of control. This gives further proof to what is, unintentionally by the author, a controlling and obsessive personality. The lack of control scares Mr Darcy, making him attempt to grasp control again by forcing Elizabeth out of his mind, “I shall not think of Miss Elizabeth Bennet again” (Slater, p. 78). When being in Elizabeth’s presence for a longer period of time, Mr Darcy escalates from obsessive to stalking tendencies, walking around Rosings Park, plotting out which routes she might take, hoping to run into her (Slater, p. 150). Mr Darcy is in fact only at Rosings at the same time as Elizabeth because he planned it this way, feeling an intense need to spend time with her.

Elizabeth’s influence on Mr Darcy grows stronger as they are apart, and Mr Darcy finds himself rattled and distressed by the way she influences his life.

Last night I dreamt I saw a figure in the distance, walking away from me down a moonlit country road. When I caught up I saw that it was Miss Elizabeth. She glanced at me sideways, without turning her head. Her dark eyes were so beautiful they gave me pain. I dared not address her, but walked on, leaving her behind in the shadows. When I woke I was sensible of a void inside me. Must she thus preoccupy my thoughts? Out of sorts all morning because of my dream (Slater, p. 89).

Mr Darcy’s obsession with Elizabeth manifests very literally in his dream, as she is distant, and Mr Darcy dares not approach her. This shows how Elizabeth is the one with the power, and she is distant from him both emotionally and physically. The fact that she does hardly look at him can be interpreted as Mr Darcy’s want for her to think more of him.

Throughout the novel, Mr Darcy's obsession with Elizabeth becomes more and more demanding for him, causing him to lose his concentration, "Peebles has been asking me about my apparel; I know not what I answer him – my mind is elsewhere. G explains about her arrangements – five minutes after she is gone, I have forgot what she has told me. Only three days more" (Slater, p. 125). He is counting down obsessively until their next meeting, thinking of nothing else, despite his best efforts to control himself.

I have resolved to control my anticipation. I can never think seriously of her. She is to be seen once more, for a few days, then put out of my mind for ever. I purpose to see little of her, & to observe her with the utmost coolness. Surely I have been exaggerating her attraction in my mind. The reality will prove a disappointment, & I shall be happily cured of my absurd preoccupation (Slater, p. 126).

Mr Darcy attempts to convince himself he does not care for Elizabeth, almost attempting to force himself into not caring for her. This gives the reader a glimpse of the man beneath the armour, the worry and concern in Mr Darcy, how vulnerable he is, and how few people truly know of his personal struggles.

As Elizabeth infiltrates more and more of Mr Darcy's mind, Mr Darcy's obsessive behaviour towards her becomes more and more dominant and even turning towards a possessive nature, "I must see her again: I cannot keep away" (Slater, p. 142). Elizabeth becomes the sole worry of Mr Darcy's life, and he finds it difficult to control what he says in her presence.

Gradually growing more confident, I ventured to raise my eyes to her face - & she looked so beautiful that I found myself blurting out the hope that she would be willing one day to leave her home at Longbourn – at least, that is what I meant to day. Happily, I believe that it came out so garbled that she did not take my meaning (Slater, p. 143).

In the original text, what Mr Darcy does say to Elizabeth is "*You* cannot have a right to such very strong local attachment. *You* cannot have been always at Longbourn" (Austen, p. 119), which she does become perplexed by. This shows Mr Darcy's insecurity and discomfort in Elizabeth's presence, caused by his affection for her. After his conversation with Elizabeth, he writes the transaction down in his diary, obsessing over what he said and how it could have been interpreted by Elizabeth. Mr Darcy keeps track of everything relating to her, and obsesses compulsively over her, "As usual in her presence, I was tongue-tied. I know not how long we were together. Eventually she told me that she must return to the Parsonage. I escorted her home, her hand resting on my arm. It is the first time she has touched me since November 26th" (Slater, p. 145).

Mr Darcy became heartbroken and hurt when Elizabeth rejected his proposal, which he made without planning to do so.

She had told me that I am the last man in the world she would ever wish to marry! That I am ungentlemanly! That I am unjust to Wickham! Surely I must rebut this last charge. Let me at least try to explain about Wickham. I have never told it, nor written it to anyone. She shall be the only one to know. May she think the better of me for it (Slater, p. 154)!

His shock at hearing what Elizabeth had to say and why she refused him gives Mr Darcy the first inclination as to why Elizabeth has been cold towards him, and he originally does not wish to have to explain himself and his actions regarding Jane and Mr Bingley, which he deems understandable, even though he sees the moral inclinations of them. Yet he does see a need to make Elizabeth see the truth about Mr Wickham, which will clear him of many of the accusations made by Elizabeth. While explaining the truth about Mr Wickham will undoubtedly protect her from him in the future, that is not Mr Darcy's ambition behind telling her, Mr Darcy wants Elizabeth to see *him* in a better life, to think him honourable and kind.

The heartache Mr Darcy experiences causes him to shift his obsession from Elizabeth in general to what she thinks of his character. Mr Darcy has previously indicated that he is not inclined to defend his actions to anyone, and the incident with Elizabeth might very well be one of the first times when he has been directly confronted with his actions, and accused of having made a decision he should not have made. To make matters worse, the person who confronted him was the object of his affection, making the accusations more painful than they could have been.

She accused me of ruining her Sister's happiness. But I had also to think of the happiness of my friend! E was doubtless unaware of Jane's clandestine letter to her Officer. Imagine Charles marrying for love, against the advice of all his friends & family, only to discover the true character of his new Wife! I am not ashamed of what I have done. I told E so in my letter (Slater, p. 166).

This also shows Mr Darcy's pride and stubbornness, he is so sure he knows more than Elizabeth about the matter of Jane and Mr Bingley, and thus had the right to take whatever actions he saw fit, not wanting to listening to reason from Elizabeth or to reconsider his actions based on new information. Mr Darcy's reaction to Elizabeth's accusations is instead to become angry.

I am furious. Not content with refusing my hand, she has insulted me in every possible way. She took my honourable proposal of marriage, & flung it in my teeth. To crown it all, she told me that I was the last man in the world she could ever marry. And I, *not gentlemanlike!* To think that I ever thought that I loved her (Slater, p. 167)!

Through his pain and heartache, Mr Darcy revisits his previous attempts to force himself to not care about Elizabeth with sheer willpower alone, convincing himself that she was not worthy of his love, and that he, being the noble man that he is, could never love such a cruel woman, “Had she studied for years together how to humiliate me, she could not have devised a more painful torture. Every minute of the day I revolve in my mind her most cruel words” (Slater, p. 164). Mr Darcy places all blame on Elizabeth, continuing to refuse admitting that he might have been wrong, or that they could have misunderstood each other.

Despite Mr Darcy’s previous account of Elizabeth’s family and family connections, when his feelings for her truly manifests, he is willing to whatever is in his power in order to spare the family from more shame than truly necessary.

In my perturbation I scarce grasped what had happened. As soon as I understood it, I knew that I must act. The fugitives were travelling towards London from Brighton. I must find them. The scandal cannot be entirely averted, but if I can force that monster to wed Lydia, the family may ride it out (Slater, p. 245).

This is where Mr Darcy makes a shift away from his obsessive behaviour to simply wanting to make Elizabeth’s life as good as he can be, which is a much healthier form of love. Mr Darcy’s actions in forcing Mr Wickham and Lydia would easily have earned Elizabeth’s gratitude for the rest of his life, but Mr Darcy decides instead to not take any credit for his actions, he is happy with knowing he has prevented Elizabeth and her family from any more pain. Mr Darcy has come to a position of acceptance of his feelings for Elizabeth, and while he still has lingering hopes for them in the future, they are no longer taking over his sanity and concentration.

While the general plot of *The Private Diary of Mr Darcy* mirrors the one of *Pride and Prejudice*, there are certain passages where the events become almost identical, such as both Mr Darcy and Elizabeth’s conversations with Lady Catherine regarding the engagement (Slater, p. 298). They are both confronted by Lady Catherine, and in both conversations, they have to deny they are engaged several times, and both refuse to promise to never become engaged in the future. Ironically for Lady Catherine, it is this conversation with Mr Darcy which causes him to propose to Elizabeth a second time, as she reveals Elizabeth is open to discussing the matter with him again. Had Lady Catherine not sought them out to make sure they are not engaged, chances are they never would have become engaged in the future.

With his engagement to Elizabeth, Mr Darcy finally feels complete for the first time in his life, “Then I said, ‘I am so happy!’ I think it is the first time I have ever spoken those

words” (Slater, p. 307). This revelation, which he could only make to Georgiana, reveals much about Mr Darcy’s struggles throughout his life, and the strain his loneliness and duty has put on him. Mr Darcy has struggles under expectations and responsibility since a young age, and in finding Elizabeth, he knows he will no longer be experiencing life alone.

Mr Darcy and friendships

Features that the author has been able to explore by having Mr Darcy keep a diary and tell his side of the story, is the friendships Mr Darcy has, and who is in his inner circle. Through *Pride and Prejudice*, the reader learns of Mr Darcy’s close friendship with Mr Bingley, although one can draw the conclusion that they are not as close as Mr Darcy and Colonel Fitzwilliam. Mr Bingley does not know about Georgiana’s experience with Mr Wickham, yet this could also be to spare Georgiana from having too many people know of her humiliation, and since Colonel Fitzwilliam is one of her guardians, it makes more sense for him to know about her situation. In *The Private Diary of Mr Darcy*, the reader learns more about the relationship Mr Darcy has with Mr Bingley, but also his sisters, to whom it seems he is closer with than what is indicated in *Pride and Prejudice*.

A new character in Mr Darcy’s inner circle is the character of Lord Byron, “I sat by the fire with Byron’s new book – a cruel satire: I hope he will not seek my good opinion of it” (Slater, p. 15). The irony in having Lord Byron as a friend to Mr Darcy is that Mr Darcy is often referred to as a Byronic hero (Slater, p. 18). The friendship with Lord Byron could be an attempt by the author to further place the novel in a point in time, seeing as Lord Byron and Mr Darcy might be in similar circles in London, and have attended university together. The character of Lord Byron is a tool to insert current events into the plot of the novel, yet also allowing Mr Darcy to be shown in a more flattering manner, considering Mr Darcy’s moral high-ground to Lord Byron’s behaviour.

If Lord Byron is the negative side of the moral compass, then Charles Bingley is the positive side. Mr Bingley is often portrayed as the kind, gentle man who could never hurt anyone, and who is thus vulnerable and easily manipulated. For Mr Darcy, Mr Bingley seems to represent a place for Mr Darcy to relax, “The distractions of this & the previous days have been lively, but I cannot shake off my anxieties. I have decided that London is too hectic for me in my present mood, & have resolved to return to Hertfordshire & Charles” (Slater, p. 23).

Mr Bingley is, in many ways, harmless, yet this might also have given Mr Darcy a lack of belief in his decisions, which he sees as fleeting. This is why Mr Darcy does not take Mr Bingley's infatuation with Jane seriously: "I have seen him think himself in love so many times; there is nothing particular about *this* flirtation" (Slater, p. 33). Mr Darcy indicates that Mr Bingley has had other flirtations in the past, and that he is a carefree spirit who often falls in love, but has never gotten seriously attached. This carefree attitude does create some worry for Mr Darcy, and makes him take on the role as a caring older brother, who knows what is best. Mr Darcy makes the arrogant decision that Jane Bennet is not a suitable match for Mr Bingley, and instead of talking to Mr Bingley about it, Mr Darcy decides to make the decision for him, not trusting him to follow his advice, "Though Jane appears virtuous, she is the scion of this abominable family. Did the Officers speak the truth? If it be so, & she has set her sights on Charles, my poor friend has no hope of happiness, & it is time I stepped in. Meanwhile, I shall speak to no body of what I have heard" (Slater, p. 58).

Although one can wonder if Mr Darcy oversteps his boundaries when ending the relationship between Jane and Mr Bingley, his actions does underline his fiercely protective nature, who will stop at nothing to protect his friends from what he sees as danger. Mr Darcy forcibly removes Mr Bingley from Netherfield in order to end the blossoming romance, "We have resolved to travel directly to London, to urge Charles to give up both his *inamorata* & the lease of Netherfield" (Slater, p. 60). Mr Darcy's controlling nature extends to friends and family, as well as his own life.

While Mr Darcy does truly believe he is acting with the best intentions, he is not unaffected from his actions.

I told him then that Jane's interest was not in his person, but in his fortune, & that I had an Officer's word of honour that it was so. When he vouchsafed no reply, I gave him some further explanations. He collapsed into a chair, his head in his hands, as I moved towards him to place my hand on his shoulder, I was smitten with grief for him & shame at what I had done. I could not touch him. I am a disgraceful coward – but I am, I hope, acting for the best (Slater, p. 68).

Although one can interpret Mr Darcy's actions as selfish and controlling, his moral dilemma shows quite redeeming to his character. Mr Darcy is not afraid of personal suffering on behalf of others, and he is willing to play the bad guy in order to save his friends from heartache and humiliation.

I truly wish that I had not been obliged to do it – but I owed it to my poor friend. How could he have been happy, married to such as her? It is fortunate indeed that I overheard those

Officers revealing the truth about her character. ---But it grieved me sorely to give my friend such pain (Slater, p. 69).

Mr Darcy sees his role in Mr Bingley's pain, and will also go to any lengths in order to make it right again, including being coerced by Lord Byron to hire an actress to keep Bingley's attentions away from Jane (Slater, p. 89).

When Mr Darcy decides to make decisions on behalf of Mr Bingley, he reveals he does not trust Mr Bingley to make decisions on his own, and considers him immature, "On reflection I am astonished at what he has told me. I have been thinking of him as innocent, almost child-like. In truth, he is probably more a man of the world than I. Am I then a poor judge of character?" (Slater, p. 119).

Caroline Bingley, who is generally seen as a slightly unsympathetic character, who indulges in gossip and ridicule of the people around her³¹, and who believes she is of a higher standing in society than many others around her, achieves some redemption in this novel. She is shown to be more insecure than she wishes to let on, and she can be very caring to those around her.

Miss Caroline and Mrs Louisa went to see her early this morning, & have reported at breakfast that '*darling Jane*' is very ill indeed. She is confined to her chamber. The ladies seem quite reconciled to her being in the house – they find her good company even on her sickbed, & nothing particular is planned for today (Slater, p. 35).

Caroline is quite drawn to Jane, and struggles to disturb her brother's romance, and ruin the happiness of two people she cares for, "We three discussed the matter at length. Miss Caroline was steadfast in her refusal to '*insult a lady with whom they had been on intimate terms*'" (Slater, p. 80).

Caroline and Mr Darcy can be seen as partners in crime when considering Jane and Mr Darcy, as they are both plotting to keep them apart. For Caroline, she struggles with betraying her brother such as she does, and "If he discovers how he has been deceived, I fear that neither his Sisters nor I will be forgiven" (Slater, p. 115). Mr Darcy harbours a great deal of sympathy for Caroline, and often feels pity for her, "Poor Miss Caroline! She was only trying to help" (Slater, p. 136). Unlike other versions, Caroline and Mr Darcy seem to be genuine friends in this novel, and Mr Darcy seems to truthfully care for her.

Again & again I attempted to shield my two companions from the glass cases. I had them one on each arm, they uttering little cries of alarm at the macabre specimens. I could only thank

³¹ While Caroline Bingley can be said to behave much like Mrs Bennet, Caroline believes that because of her own place in society, she has more right to be proud than those of lesser standing.

providence that I had excluded G from this expedition. I think I shall never forget Miss Caroline's distressed face turned towards me and, behind her head, a row of glass jars in each of which floated an unborn child (Slater, p. 92).

Revealing the desire to protect Caroline, he proves to the reader that she is truly a friend of his.

Mr Darcy's relationship with his Cousin Anne is also explored in *The Private Diary of Mr Darcy*. Anne de Bourgh is a character who is often given a new depth in spin-off novels. In *The Private Diary of Mr Darcy*, she is shown to be more intelligent and has a head for business. Mr Darcy is frequently impressed by her profound reflections on the future of Rosings and her ideas to modernize the estate. While it has been decided that Mr Darcy and Anne are to marry, Mr Darcy has never had a desire to go through with this plan, until he finds himself obsessed with Elizabeth Bennet. Mr Darcy believes that by marrying Anne, his infatuation with Elizabeth will have no other choice than to die.

I slept fitfully that first night, & woke in the small hours with the realization that I must marry my Cousin Anne. It is the answer to everything: I shall no longer be able to pine for E, for every out of my reach; I shall be fulfilling my duty to the family; I shall enable my Cousin to enjoy the role of Wife & Mother, which I fear would otherwise be denied her. I feel nothing for her, nothing. But it is of no account: as I can never love another woman, I might just as well make the sacrifice. It is all the same to me (Slater, p. 181).

By marrying Anne, Mr Darcy will do exactly what is expected of him, and shows a sense of selflessness, in giving his cousin security and fulfilling the wish of his mother and aunt.

Mr Darcy and Wickham

Considering the fact that the truth about what happened with Mr Wickham is something which is revealed through Mr Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, it is very natural for the aspect of Mr Wickham to have a prominent role in *The Private Diary of Mr Darcy*.

I have seen *him* – whom I hoped never to meet again! [...] In his impertinence he bowed to me, & I so taken by surprise that I actually returned his salutation! And – the worst of it – *she* was there, in the Meryton street! With a crowd of people. She stood beside him, gazing up into his face. Does she too admire him (Slater, p. 45)?

The initial anger with seeing Mr Wickham is enhanced when seeing him with Elizabeth, which creates a fear in Mr Darcy that he is in danger of losing another woman he has come to care for to the same man. The reader is also able to understand more about Mr Wickham's character, from Mr Darcy's experience with him when they were children.

We were about fourteen years old, Byron, Wickham & I, hiding in the shrubbery, behind the rose hedge. [Wickham and Byron raped a maid, Little Letty Hopkins] And – O shameful memory – I did nothing. Nothing! I remained hidden behind the hedge. The roses were in

flower: I remember the sweet fresh smell, & the prickles biting into my flesh as I gripped the branches. [Wickham and Byron leave the scene unaffected] (Slater, p. 46)

Since Mr Darcy knows the extent of what Mr Wickham is capable of, he is able to create fear in Mr Darcy such as no other, and that fear is enhanced when he sees the charismatic Mr Wickham become closer to Elizabeth.

The hold Mr Wickham has over Mr Darcy puts Mr Darcy in a vulnerable position, as Mr Darcy is willing to go far to keep Mr Wickham happy and away from the people he cares about. Unfortunately for Mr Darcy, Mr Wickham is aware of this, and uses it to his advantage, seeing Mr Darcy's desperation in keeping him away and give him what he wants, "I must seek Wickham out, & discover what he is about. If necessary, I must make good Pargeter's oversight, & pay him his due" (Slater, p. 48). Mr Wickham is in many ways Mr Darcy's weakness, and Mr Darcy is thus easily manipulated by Mr Wickham.

So I guessed aright: Pargeter has not sent him the moneys. I am surprized at this: I have never known Pargeter to fail in such a commission before. Could I myself, in my distraction, have failed to make necessary arrangements? Wickham's words were a clear warning: if his money was not paid, he would spread his vile tittle-tattle abroad (Slater, p. 49).

Mr Darcy lives in constant fear of Mr Wickham's blackmail, knowing it is not his reputation in danger, but that of his beloved sister.

Mr Darcy's two obsessions come crashing together when Mr Wickham elopes with Lydia Bennet, and Mr Darcy is seeing history repeat itself. His hatred for Wickham is fuelled together with his affection for Elizabeth, coercing him into taking drastic actions to ensure that Mr Wickham does not destroy the reputation of the Bennet's (Slater, p. 248-249). Mr Wickham however, could foresee how Mr Darcy would react to the situation, showing the vulnerability Mr Darcy has considering Mr Wickham, "'Well, I knew you was mooning after her Sister Elizabeth – didn't see why you should enjoy your little romance in unalloyed bliss. Lydia has brought discredit to the whole Bennet family. Your young lady is no longer marriageable, you will find. What a pity!'" (Slater, p. 255). Mr Wickham threatens to take away everything Mr Darcy cares for, causing him more heartache and misery.

Although Mr Wickham is acting on his own accord, and did what he did out of spite and cruelty, Mr Darcy ends up blaming himself for the incident.

He insisted at first on taking the matter into his own hands. I was hard put to it to convince him that I alone must take the responsibility for the arrangements, since it was my foolish reserve, & reluctance to denounce Wickham for what he was, that had done all the harm in the first place (Slater, p. 259).

Mr Darcy considers himself responsible for Mr Wickham's actions, because he has not warned people of his true nature. These unrealistic expectations Mr Darcy has for himself represent how Mr Darcy finds himself responsible for everything that happens to those around him, and deems it on himself to take charge of the happiness of everyone around him. Considering the fact that Mr Darcy was made guardian of Georgiana and landlord of Pemberley from a young age, he has developed a habit of believing he has the world on his shoulders, and that he alone is responsible for the good and the bad that happens.

Mr. Darcy and self-reflection

Through having Mr Darcy keep a diary, the author has allowed for her character to self-reflect on his emotions and actions throughout the novel, along with current and past events:

Christmas Day, alone at Pemberley! I anticipate a strange but pleasant experience – utterly unlike last year's house-party which filled every chamber in the place. I feel no anxiety for G in London with the Fitzwilliam Cousins: theirs should prove a large & merry party. And as for poor Charles – my presence would have done nothing to lighten his mood (Slater, p. 259).

Mr Darcy's trust in his friends and affection for his sister become especially apparent through the actions Mr Darcy takes that have not been made public to the readers through spin-off novels which are not told from Mr Darcy's point of view. This includes confessions of his fears regarding entering a relationship with Elizabeth, “‘Tho I confess that, from mine own observation, an entanglement with a lady can prove so dangerous that I am, in truth, nervous of burning my fingers’” (Slater, p. 130).

When meeting Elizabeth Bennet, Mr Darcy enters a chain of events that results in him having to reconsider what he thought to be true for his entire life, which can explain for Mr Darcy's emotional frustration:

For the first time in my life, I wonder about Mamma – could she possibly have been as proud & arrogant as my Aunt now seems to me? I begin to feel embarrassed at her manifold discourtesies. Is she truly as overbearing as she seems? And if I have never noticed it before, am I too guilty of the same fault? Am I proud (Slater, p. 149)?

Mr Darcy becomes losing respect for the memory of his mother and his own heritage, both proving how Elizabeth influences him and changes his life. Unintentionally, Elizabeth changes Mr Darcy's worldview and opinions of his family. Mr Darcy does, however, show some insight in the way Elizabeth influences him, admitting to himself that she is right in her accusations, “Today my rage is spent: I fear that all her accusations against me are justified. I am indeed cold & insensitive – else how could I have misjudged her feelings? I truly believed

that she was encouraging my suit. I had no expectation of her refusing me” (Slater, p. 168). To his diary, Mr Darcy is first able to admit that he was wrong, which is the first step towards Mr Darcy abandoning his superior attitude to Elizabeth’s family connections, “Thinking over my indignation with Aunt Catherine, I find I can no longer despise the Bennet family, whatever their situation. I am indeed a different person from the proud popinjay who presumed to make Elizabeth that excruciating offer of marriage” (Slater, p. 262)! In order to be worthy of Elizabeth’s affections, Mr Darcy has gone through a significant change, shedding his previous pride and self-righteousness, admitting to himself that Elizabeth was right in her judgement of him.

Mr Darcy’s self-reflection mostly concerns Elizabeth’s opinion of and accusations towards him, showing how much control she has over him, and how much her words tortured him, “I went over & over her words. It must then be true that I am no gentleman. I must be selfish. She is right to hate me, & I am indeed the last man in the world who deserves to wed her” (Slater, p. 168). Elizabeth’s hold over him pushes Mr Darcy to re-consider everything, further indicating how Mr Darcy is not used to being refused by women, nor having his family not receiving the adoration they are used to.

Am I really as proud as Elizabeth suggests? All day I have been pondering this question. For the first time, I begin to wonder about my complacent assumption that I have a right to my superior position in society. To whom do I owe this conviction? To those responsible for my upbringing (Slater, p. 170)?

Slater uses Mr Darcy’s self-reflection as a balancing effect to his obsessive behaviour towards Elizabeth. Mr Darcy is obsessing over Elizabeth because she rejects him, causing him to reconsider himself. His obsession with her stems from his own insecurities, and his self-indulgent attitude, “I have sneered at Elizabeth for her family’s shortcomings, & proclaimed that an alliance with her would turn me into a laughing-stock! But in insulting her family, was not I forgetting the shortcomings of *my own*” (Slater, p. 171)? Slater has turned *Pride and Prejudice* into a classic scenario of two people finding each other after one of them rejects the other.

Slater does add insult to injury when having Mr Darcy’s entire world fall apart because of the rejection of one woman, proving to the reader just how insecure Mr Darcy truly is:

I am pale & grim-faced, with a great beak of a nose which shews me to be proud no matter how I behave. I have always been conscious of my height, which I felt conferred additional standing on me. Now I see I am a great, lumbering dunderhead. Of course she could never love me! What arrogance to have presumed that she could (Slater, p. 172)!

Why would the rejection of one woman affect Mr Darcy to such an extent, when he has several other options? Elizabeth's rejection alone has inspired Mr Darcy to give up on all women:

Elizabeth too was abominable, treating my honourable offer of marriage as an insult. I awoke yesterday with a strong sense of injury, & brooded all day on the wrongs which she has inflicted on me. *Ungentlemanlike*, forsooth! I have resolved to have nothing more to do with women (Slater, p. 171).

This blatant overreaction reveals a man deeply troubled, and who has had a very sheltered upbringing.

Slater forces a reaction from her character when introducing a setting for her character that would coerce Mr Darcy into revealing the extents of his open mind:

Opening the door of the final chamber, we came upon Byron's two pages, Patroclus & Rushton, half-clad, embracing on the bed. We retired hastily & closed the door. I do not think that they observed us. I was shocked, & would have had it out with their master, but Charles dissuaded me (Slater, p. 214).

While Mr Darcy later comes to the realization that Patroclus is in fact a woman (Slater, p. 219), to discover what he thought was two male servants in such a situation would undoubtedly cause a reaction from him. Mr Bingley, who serves as a balancing act to Mr Darcy, does use this situation in order to bring it to Mr Darcy's attention that it is not his responsibility to insert himself in situations that are of no affect to him:

I have been reflecting on Charles's words of yesterday [Why interfere in matters which are not your concern?]. Am I habitually of an interfering disposition? Was Charles indirectly alluding to my efforts to save him from a disastrous marriage to Jane? Whatever her faults, was I wrong in presuming to come between Charles & the woman he loved (Slater, p. 214)?

This becomes another turning point for Mr Darcy in seeing himself as others do, and also indirectly helps him come to terms with his own obsessive behaviour, which extends from Elizabeth to most aspects of his life. Mr Darcy has created a need and desire for himself to be in control of every situation surrounding him, both those affecting him directly and not. Mr Darcy is shown to be very self-reliant, and considering how he has been so for a number of years, this has developed into Mr Darcy not being able to relinquish control.

The Mr Darcy in this interpretation differs greatly from the one in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Me and Mr Darcy* and *The Darcys of Pemberley*. Mr Darcy in this version is more troubled than the reader has encountered earlier, and has a more obsessive and controlling personality. This Mr Darcy is darker and more extreme than the others, living more of his life in solitude, and suffering in silence. This Mr Darcy has a more trying journey, and

experiences more emotional turmoil than the other representations of him. The reader is also made aware of larger parts of his past, which gives him more depth and makes him more complex. Out of the three Mr Darcy's in this thesis, this Mr Darcy is the one that has been changed the most from the original, by giving him a voice of his own, giving him the possibility to explain his version of events, and showing the reader what goes on in his mind.

Conclusion

*The remarkable cultural history of this novel is impossible to tell succinctly. Entire books have been – and should be – written to describe the twists and turns in its afterlife.*³²

Through the spin-off genre, the readers of *Pride and Prejudice* are able to rework the characters of their choice, and change their reasoning, motivation and destiny. The three novels explored in this thesis are three very different interpretations of the same character, with the authors changing a well-known character in order to fit into the story they have created around him.

The area of spin-off fiction is one that has not been devoted much academic study, yet considering its widespread appeal and growing popularity, it should be seen as a new direction in the field of reception of Austen's work, one where the reader, becoming a writer, takes a character and re-creates him. Mr Darcy is the perfect example of this movement, and the culture surrounding him and *Pride and Prejudice* has given Mr Darcy "...a more transparently passionate inner life and comes to fit the stereotype of the irrationally loving lover, out of control."³³

The focus on Mr Darcy and the popular action of making him the focus point of novelistic responses to *Pride and Prejudice* is important because of what it says about the act of reading that these authors are a part of. Through their own initial reading of *Pride and Prejudice*, the authors have taken the character and formed him in a new way, making the change from reader to author, making the act of reading an active one. The character of Mr Darcy engages the readers and inspires the many new lives Mr Darcy goes on to live beyond the pages of *Pride and Prejudice*. Janeites read *Pride and Prejudice* actively and interactively, inserting themselves into the novel and the characters of the novels into their own image. Actively by giving characters a new life beyond the pages, and interactively by sharing this new life with other readers.

³² Devoney Looser, "The cult of *Pride and Prejudice* and its author," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*, ed. Janet Todd. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 157.

³³ Janet Todd, "The romantic hero," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*, ed. Janet Todd. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 157.

The increasing popularity of Mr Darcy and Jane Austen has been explained with several theories. “[...]Critics suggest Austen’s popularity signals a post-feminist moment, with overworked women longing not for equitable treatment but for a return to an imagined past when strong, handsome men with lots of money fell into the paths of deserving women and put them on pedestals” (Looser, p. 184). In the case of the novels in this thesis, the fantasy of the strong, powerful and rich man is at their core. All three novels approach this fantasy differently, yet it is still present. In *Me and Mr Darcy*, this fantasy is directly addressed, yet discarded as appealing throughout the course of events. In *The Darcys of Pemberley* Mr Darcy is still the embodiment of this fantasy, the strong and brooding man. In *The Private Diary of Mr Darcy*, this fantasy is the underlying inspiration, yet he has been darkened and made more troubled.

As the novels used in this thesis show, Mr Darcy is open to many interpretations, thus any interpretation or response to the character of Mr Darcy in the framework given to him in the original novel is possible by the readers.

The novel’s reincarnations have become far too diffuse to understand through any particular interpretative lens. Jane Austen has, according to one critic, been ‘pimped’ or customised into a kind of ‘Have it Your Way’ author. Austen has become ‘an infinitely exploitable global brand’, with *Pride and Prejudice* poised as the ‘representative Austen title’. In other words, Austen serves as everyone’s everything (Looser, p. 185).

This opens up to a new branch of reception, giving its worldwide popularity and numerous interpretations of both plot and character.

The Mr Darcy created in *Me and Mr Darcy* has been modernized to accompany a twenty-first century woman, and Alexandra Potter has made him more daring and rebellious than what is seen in *Pride and Prejudice*. Mr Darcy is a manifestation of the common fantasy, and changes along with the needs of the protagonist, Emily Albright. Mr Darcy is an outlet and a form of escapism for Emily, and he changes away from her image of the perfect man when she is ready to abandon the safety-net she has created him to be. Mr Darcy is initially romantic and open-minded, then becomes more rigid and traditional as the novel progresses. This character can be interpreted as the opposite of the character in *Pride and Prejudice*, where Mr Darcy softens and becomes more agreeable as the novel progresses. In this interpretation, Mr Darcy is used as a tool for Emily on her own road towards self-discovery. Potter has mirrored Mr Darcy in order to show how he, and thus the fantasy of him, are out-dated.

The Mr Darcy created in *The Darcys of Pemberley* is a manifestation of a different, yet equally common, fantasy. Mr Darcy's love for Elizabeth Bennet, and their subsequent marriage has softened him, and created a more relaxed Mr Darcy. Shannon Winslow has attempted to rid Mr Darcy of his brooding exterior, while still relating him to the character from *Pride and Prejudice*. This creates an inconsistency in the character, with the loving and caring husband on one side, yet the stern and protective businessman who keeps things to himself on the other. This portrayal is the one that is most similar to the one in *Pride and Prejudice*, and the interpretation which has stayed most true to the original.

The Mr Darcy created in *The Private Diary of Mr Darcy* is the one changed the most from the original character. Through an elaborate insight into Mr Darcy's private thoughts, Maya Slater has created a character who is darker, psychologically troubled and showing signs of very obsessive behaviour. It can, however, be argued that it was not Slater's intention to create a less flattering version of Mr Darcy, only to provide the reader with an explanation of his behaviour, and to give the character some depth. While it can be difficult to argue that this character may differ greatly from his original despite the fact that the events of the *The Private Diary of Mr Darcy* are not logistically or practically incompatible with the action of *Pride and Prejudice*. Since *Pride and Prejudice* narrates the action of months in which Mr Darcy was not directly present in the events that are seen to occur, it can be argued that the darker and psychologically troubled Mr Darcy does not seem compatible with the one in *Pride and Prejudice*, where Mr Darcy seems more balanced.

The active reading of Mr Darcy shown in this thesis reveals much about both the cult following of Mr Darcy, and also the fantasies the readers have about the character. There are several elements that all three interpretations have in common, one of which is a sense of loyalty to the character. All three authors have an apparent affection for Mr Darcy, and all three novels attempt to flatter him. Slater is the only one who makes an attempt to show Mr Darcy in a less flattering light, and this is not done without giving him some redeeming characteristics to balance him out, including a caring attitude towards his sister and friends, and a genuine concern for the reputation of the Bennet family along. The loyalty of the authors suggest that they are admirers of *Pride and Prejudice*, and also reveals how their re-imagining of him is done in their own image, as Janeites and fans of Mr Darcy. The authors are explaining Mr Darcy's behaviour, which might otherwise appear unmotivated. Austen-

fans are known for being protective of both the novels and their characters, and this becomes apparent in how the authors attempt to offer excuses for Mr Darcy when he is behaving badly.

Although the interpretations of Mr Darcy are different from each other, they have all contained some traits that transcend new readings. One such trait is Mr Darcy's arrogance. While the authors have re-explained and reinvented this arrogance, it is nevertheless still present in the novels. In *Me and Mr Darcy*, Mr Darcy's arrogance becomes apparent throughout the discussion of a future relationship, where Emily and Mr Darcy disagrees about how to live their lives, and Mr Darcy refuses to consider her desires. In *The Darcys of Pemberley*, the arrogance is manifested in Mr Darcy's decision to keep Elizabeth out of decisions regarding Mr Wickham's blackmail, and his distrust of Elizabeth's ability to handle the situation. In *The Private Diary of Mr Darcy*, the arrogance in Mr Darcy mirrors the arrogant behaviour in *Pride and Prejudice*, even including passages of Mr Darcy's self-reflection considering the arrogant behaviour of himself and his family, drawing into question whether they are justified in their superior position in society. Considering how Mr Darcy is notorious for his pride and his arrogance, by keeping this trait intact, the novels keep a direct link to the original character. While the characters in the novels examined in this novel are substantially different from one another, through the character trait of pride and arrogance, the characters are still similar enough to appear plausible interpretations of the same character.

Considering how the authors of spin-off fiction related to *Pride and Prejudice* are eager to flatter and defend their favourite literary character, it has become very popular to rewrite his pride into a more redeeming characteristic. All three novels explored in this thesis have reworked Mr Darcy's proud and arrogant behaviour as a different matter of circumstances. In *Me and Mr Darcy* and *The Darcys of Pemberley* his arrogance is being explained as humility and shyness, and in *The Private Diary of Mr Darcy* it is explained as due to distractions and bad influence.

The branch of spin-off novels devoted to *Pride and Prejudice* and to Jane Austen herself are currently a female-dominated field, and 'Janeite' is a term indicating female gender. While male readers and male Janeites are not unheard of, they are not as heard and visible in the field of 'Austenmania', and *Pride and Prejudice* is even classified as 'chick-lit' by some critics.

Perhaps, however, women largely without adult agency can find in *reading* romance fiction a regressing to infantile comfort and a way of transcending their exclusion from male preserves since a gendered cultural consciousness can emerge that imaginatively empowers them. At the

same time it can provide compensatory consolation in a changing world. It is not accident that the fictional mass-romance boom paralleled second-wave feminism (Todd, p. 160-161).

Feminism and a powerful voice can also be in the novels in this thesis, as they have attempted to capture Elizabeth's strong opinions and refusal to succumb to pressure. In *Me and Mr Darcy*, Emily is this strong female character, and speaks up for women when she refuses to be bullied into a decision she does not agree with.

The field of modern reception of *Pride and Prejudice*, including the branches concerning 'Darcymania' and spin-off novels, is one in constant progress. Considering how readers have taken it upon themselves to reinvent the classic novel, or imagining what would have happened after the wedding, and how this has created a new form of reading the novel, there is availability to improve the theoretical field to include active reading.

Still, plenty of work remains to make sense of how and why *Pride and Prejudice* has captured commercial, popular and critical attention from decade to decade, generation to generation, whether in relation to readers' gender, class, age, race, sexuality or national origin (Looser, p. 175).

The question of why *Pride and Prejudice* has seen such popularity is still progressing by authors such as Deborah Yaffe, Claudia L. Johnson and Juliette Wells, and this should include focus on how a single character has gained popularity and a life outside the novel.

In this thesis I have shown how the spin-off novels contribute in keeping the *Pride and Prejudice* current and alive. By publishing novelistic responses to a classic novel, the novel stays in discussion and in circulation. Through changing the character to fit certain fantasies and the needs of different interpretive communities, the novelistic responses differ from each other, allowing for there to be several different novels published which contain the same plot and characters. Mr Darcy lives on in the image of his readers, who take it upon themselves to reinvent him and share their reinventions with new readers, be that by on-line fan fiction, filmic adaptations or literary novels. The character of Mr Darcy is changing and evolving through time and through different interpretive communities.

There can be many interpretations as to why the authors have taken liberties in changing a literary character, aside from fulfilling their own fantasy and desires for how the character would evolve, behave and think. By adding a new story to an existing character, a new depth is added to the original story, putting previous events in a new light, along with adding a re-found interest in the novel. Spin-off novels keep the original novel alive and current, and keep the characters evolving through time.

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